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Yrs. affectionately
J. M. Cowper

LETTERS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER;

BEING A

Selection from his Correspondence :

WITH

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE,
AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF HIS
CORRESPONDENTS.

LONDON :

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

56, PATERNOSTER ROW ;

65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ; AND 164, PICCADILLY.

LONDON :
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL,
QUEEN VICTORIA STREET.

PREFACE

THE extensive popularity of Cowper is evident from the numerous editions, of every form and price, which have brought his POEMS within the reach of all classes of readers. But he also highly excelled in another department of literature—namely, LETTER-WRITING.

Two critics of great eminence, both men of genius, and on most questions of politics and literature decided antagonists, have agreed entirely in their admiration of Cowper's Epistolary Correspondence. SOUTHEY not only calls him the most popular poet of his generation, but the best of English letter-writers.

LORD JEFFREY says of his letters: "There is something in the sweetness and facility of the diction, and more, perhaps, in the glimpses they afford of a pure and benevolent mind, that diffuses a charm over the whole collection, and communicates an interest that cannot always be commanded by performances of greater dignity and pretension. These letters will continue to be read long after the curiosity is gratified to which, perhaps, they owed their first celebrity; for the character with which they make us acquainted will

always attract by its rarity, and engage by its elegance. The feminine delicacy of Cowper's manners and disposition, the romantic and unbroken retirement in which his life was passed, and the singular gentleness and modesty of his whole character, disarm him of those terrors that so often shed an atmosphere of repulsion around the persons of celebrated writers. The interest of this picture is still further heightened by the recollection of that tremendous malady to the visitations of which he was subject, and by the spectacle of that perpetual conflict which was maintained, through the greater part of his life, between the depression of those constitutional horrors, and the gaiety that resulted from a playful imagination, and a heart animated by the mildest affections."

ROBERT HALL, whose judgment took into account higher merit than mere literary composition, said "that he considered the letters of Cowper as the finest specimens of the epistolary style in our language."

They are, indeed, richly imbued with evangelical truth and spiritual feeling; and even when, through his constitutional infirmity, unable to find comfort for his own spirit, he holds out to others the gospel as the only source of true peace and happiness.

It is to be regretted that compositions so valuable should be confined to an exceedingly small class of readers, and be so little known to the British public at the present day. This may arise in part from their .

great bulk, and from their never being printed separately from the other parts of Cowper's Works. In the collected editions, the Letters occupy six volumes, while his Original Poems hardly fill the space of two.

It is thought that a SELECTION will be a valuable contribution for the service both of religion and literature. A selection may be advantageously made, by omitting such letters as refer merely to unimportant and transient topics ; also those that may be considered as duplicates, as when the writer narrates the same events or feelings to different correspondents ; and also leaving out the letters addressed to booksellers and critics when he was translating Homer or the Latin poems of Milton ; subjects which, however they occupied the time of the poet, can hardly be interesting to the generality of readers.

To the Selection of the Letters is prefixed a brief Memoir, giving an account of the chief points or periods of the poet's history ; also, short notices of his principal correspondents.



COWPER'S MOTHER.

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LIFE OF WILLIAM COWPER.



BERKHAMPSTEAD RECTORY.

I. CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

A.D. 1731—1748.

WILLIAM COWPER was born in the rectory of Great Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, on the 26th of November, 1731. This village is about twenty-five miles from London, on the left hand of the London

and North Western Railway. His father, Dr. John Cowper, was chaplain to George II. and rector of Berkhamstead. His mother was Anne, the daughter of Roger Donne, Esq. of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk, a descendant of Dr. Donne, the famous divine, poet, and satirist of the reign of James I. She died in 1737, at the age of thirty-four ; leaving, of several children, only two sons surviving. Her death occurred at the birth of John, the younger. William, the eldest, was aged six years. The same year that he lost his mother, he was put under the care of Dr. Pitman, the master of a large boarding-school at Market Street, in Hertfordshire. This was a sad change of scene from the happy parsonage and the mother's tenderness, as he remembered it in after life :

The nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid ;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit or confectionery plum :
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love that knew no fall.

The poor delicate and timid child had hardships of various kinds to conflict with, the chief of which consisted in being singled out as a victim for the cruelty of a lad of fifteen years of age, whose savage treatment impressed such a dread of his figure on little Cowper's mind, that he was afraid to lift his eyes upon his persecutor, higher than his knees, and he knew him better by his shoebuckles than by any other part of his dress. This tyrant's practices were at length discovered ; he was expelled from the school, and Cowper was removed from it. It was found about this time that his eyesight was seriously affected, and he was placed under the care

of an eminent oculist, in whose house he spent two years. He was then sufficiently recovered to enter Westminster school, at that time under the mastership of Dr. Nicholls. He learned well, was in high favour with his master, and once received a silver groat for his exercise. To this he alludes in his poem entitled "Table Talk."

At Westminster, where little poets strive
To set a distich upon six and five,
Where Discipline helps opening buds of sense,
And makes his pupils proud with silver pence,
I was a poet too.

He excelled also at cricket and football ; but what was more uncommon for a boy of his age, he was afflicted with a lowness of spirits. Even when a young child, he had exhibited a constitutional tendency to melancholy and despair ; this showed itself when he was at Westminster school ; again when he was at the Middle Temple at the age of twenty-one, and at other seasons. We notice at this early part of the narrative the constitutional depression of spirits in Cowper, that we may pursue his affecting story in its detail of facts, without stopping to indulge in long and nice discussions about the influence of religion in unsettling his mind ; as it is plain from the comparison of dates that the deplorable malady was infixed in his frame long before he gave religion even a transient thought.

At Westminster, Cowper was the schoolfellow of several persons who afterwards rose to distinguished eminence. Among these, we may mention Warren-Hastings, Lord Dartmouth, Cumberland the dramatic writer and grandson of Bentley, Bonnell Thornton,

Lloyd, Colman, and Churchill the poet. Joseph Hill, to whom he addressed some pleasant poems and confidential letters on business, was also one of his school-fellows at Westminster.

II. EARLY MANHOOD.

A.D. 1749—1763.

At the age of eighteen, he left the school, and returned to his father at Berkhamstead, where he remained three-quarters of a year. He was then sent to acquire the practice of law, with Mr. Chapman, an attorney. At this attorney's he had a fellow-clerk, Edward Thurlow, afterwards so famous as the Lord Chancellor of England. "I did actually live," says Cowper, "three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor; that is to say, I slept three years in his house; but I *lived*, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton Row. There was I and the future Lord Chancellor constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law." The house to which he alludes was that of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, his father's brother, who had two daughters. The eldest of them became Lady Hesketh, who many years afterwards ministered to the necessities of her cousin. The youngest, Theodora, was beloved by Cowper, and she returned his attachment; but her father, on account of the too near kinsmanship, or perhaps for other reasons deeper and wiser still, placed an absolute negative on their union.

Three years mis-spent in an attorney's office were almost of course followed by several more equally mis-spent in the Temple, where he took chambers in the

year 1752. Not long after his settlement here, he was, as he himself relates, struck with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same can have the least conception of. "Day and night," says he, "I was upon the rack, lying down in horror; and rising up in despair." He needed something more salutary than amusement, but he had no one to direct him where to find light and peace.

In 1754, he went through the ceremony of being called to the bar. Not that he was likely ever to become a laborious lawyer; but his family connexions had patronage at their disposal, and one necessary qualification for his enjoying it was his having the rank of a barrister. He was actually made a Commissioner of Bankrupts, and might have held the lucrative post of clerk to the House of Lords, had not his malady prevented. In 1756, he lost his father. He was sent for to attend him in his last illness; but just before he arrived his father died. Then he felt for the first time that he and his native place were disunited for ever; and at no period was he more sensible of the beauties of the fields and woods of his childhood's residence, than just when he left them all behind, to return no more. Similar, no doubt, are the agonized feelings of many a son and daughter of the parsonage house and manse, when they quit such places for ever.

About this time, his most valued friend, Sir William Russell, was drowned while bathing in the Thames; and being entirely separated from his cousin Theodora, he deemed himself "cast forth a wanderer on a world unknown."

Doomed as I am in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past;

Deprived of every joy I valued most,
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost ;
Call not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humour or of spleen.
Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,
Him snatched by fate, in early youth, away ;
And her, through tedious years of doubt and pain,
Fixed in her choice, and faithful, but in vain.
Oh, prone to pity, generous and sincere,
Whose eye ne'er yet refused the wretch a tear ;
Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes ;
See me, ere yet my distant course half done,
Cast forth a wanderer on a world unknown :
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost ;
Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,
And ready tears wait only leave to flow ;
Why all that soothes a heart from anguish free,
All that delights the happy, palls with me.

These pathetic verses were addressed to his elder cousin, Harriet, afterwards Lady Hesketh.

But in a few months, he found new companions and new pursuits. He joined the Nonsense Club, a small society of Westminster men, who dined together every Thursday. He united with Bonnell Thornton and Colman in publishing a periodical called the *Connoisseur*, in the manner of the *Spectator*. About this time, meeting Thurlow, his fellow-clerk, he said to him, "Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall always be nobody ; and you will be Lord Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." Thurlow smiled and said, "I surely will."

In 1763, his relative, Major Cowper, who claimed the appointment to certain offices connected with the House of Lords, informed him that three of them were

vacant, and made him an offer of the two most profitable places, intending the other for his friend, Mr. Arnold. Dazzled by so splendid a proposal, he at once accepted it ; but at the same time, according to his own expression, seemed to receive a dagger in his heart. Nothing could restore his tranquillity ; a deep melancholy seized him ; day and night, for a whole week, he was harassed and perplexed between the apparent folly of casting away the only visible chance he had of being well provided for, and the impossibility of retaining it. He begged his cousin to accept the resignation of the two places in favour of Mr. Arnold, flattering himself that the clerkship of the journals would fall fairly and easily within the scope of his abilities. But the right of his relative to nominate having been called in question, Cowper was informed that he might expect an examination at the bar of the House, as to his sufficiency for the post he had undertaken. He spent several months of unavailing preparation to stand the examination ; and then there came upon him a state of horror which lasted several days, and which ended in an attempt to strangle himself. Conviction of sin, and especially of the atrocity of his late attempt, now came upon him, with a sense of God's wrath, and a deep despair of escaping it. As he says himself, it will be proper to draw a veil over the secrets of his prison-house, and simply to state that his mind became so dreadfully unhinged, that his friends agreed he should be carried to St. Alban's, where Dr. Cotton kept a house for the reception of such patients. Montgomery, in a preface to an edition of the "Olney Hymns," thus describes Cowper when he was taken to St. Alban's :—"One day, in the month of December, 1763, a sufferer under the most deplorable of

human maladies, was brought to the house of a medical practitioner, at a small town in a midland county of England, and left under his care. The patient was little advanced in manhood, but sorrow had done the work of years on his debilitated frame and faded cheek; while something more than sorrow had wrought a sadder ruin within. Reason had been overthrown, and imagination, usurping its seat, reigned as 'Lord of misrule' through all the region of thought, and over all the faculties of the soul. He was a member of the younger branch of an illustrious house. He, too, like Newton, had early lost his mother, and being a delicate child, that loss was to him in every way incalculable and irreparable."

III. HIS RECOVERY AND RETIREMENT.

A.D. 1764—1767

HIS conviction of sin and expectation of instant judgment never left him from the 7th of December, the day he left London, until the middle of July following. After a series of varying horrors, he one day ventured to open his Bible for comfort and instruction. The first verse he saw was the twenty-fifth of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans:—"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." It is a fine suggestion of Dr. James Hamilton, that each reader should mark in golden letters the text which has been to him the gate of heaven; and he specifies particularly this very text to be signalized with the

most brilliant memorial by that stricken deer, who had long been panting for the water-brooks ; and who in that spot at last found comfort. In a moment, says Cowper, I believed and received the gospel. He was overwhelmed with love and wonder ; he felt joy unspeakable and full of glory. His physician was afraid lest the sudden transition from despair to joy should terminate in a fatal frenzy. But in a short time, Dr. Cotton was satisfied, and acquiesced in the soundness of his recovery. Cowper remained with his physician for several months after his restoration ; and providentially he had been placed under the care of one who was able rightly to minister to the mind diseased as well as to the body. He now resumed his pen, not to write flimsy essays and foolish verses, but odes such as the following, which was afterwards inserted into the Olney collection under the title of the "Happy Change."

How bless'd thy creature is, O God,
When with a single eye
He views the lustre of thy word,
The day-spring from on high !

Through all the storms that veil the skies,
And frown on earthly things,
The Sun of righteousness he eyes,
With healing on his wings.

Struck by that light, the human heart,
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurked before.

The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire formed within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

The glorious orb, whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first, obedient to thy word,
He started from the goal,

Has cheered the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart ;
But, Jesus, 'tis thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart.

His friend, John Newton, thus describes his mental condition before he went to St. Alban's : " If happiness could have been found in classical attainments, in an elegant taste, in the exertions of wit, fancy and genius, and in the esteem and converse of such persons as in these respects were most congenial with himself, he would have been happy. But he was not. He wondered (as thousands in a similar situation still do) that he should continue dissatisfied, with all the means apparently conducive to satisfaction within his reach. But in due time, the cause of disappointment was discovered to him: he had lived without God in the world." Thus far Newton. Cowper himself amply describes the remedy in many of the letters inserted in this selection.

Being determined no more to see London, the scene of his former abominations, as he calls it, he resigned his office of Commissioner of Bankrupts, and desired his brother to find lodgings for him near himself in Cambridge or its vicinity. He could not find any place there that would suit, but easily found accommodation at Huntingdon, fourteen miles from Cambridge ; and to Huntingdon William Cowper removed on the 22d of June, 1765, accompanied by his brother, who introduced him to his new abode, and left him. He felt like a

traveller in the midst of an inhospitable desert, without a friend to comfort, or a guide to direct him. But by an evening walk, and by pouring out his heart in prayer, the oppression was taken off, and he was enabled to trust in Him who careth for the stranger. He went to church next day, joined in the service with delight ; and when the Gospel for the day was read, being the parable of the Prodigal Son, he saw himself in that glass so clearly, and the loving-kindness of his slighted and forgotten Lord so vividly, that the whole scene was realized to him, and acted over in his heart.

It may be easily supposed that Cowper was in no haste to seek out any new acquaintance ; but he soon found all he wanted in the family of the Unwins. The Rev. Morley Unwin had for several years been master of the free school, and lecturer of the two churches in Huntingdon. His son had been pleased with Cowper's countenance, and felt a strong inclination to call upon him ; but the father dissuaded him from this, as it was said the stranger rather declined society than courted it. One day, however, young Unwin, seeing him take a solitary walk, joined him ; and finding that his advances were gladly received, he engaged himself to tea with him that afternoon. To the inexpressible joy of Cowper, he found in his new companion sentiments of religion, spiritual and lively. They opened their hearts to each other ; and a friendship began, which terminated only by the death of young Unwin, nearly twenty years after. The friends were soon drawn closer together.

Cowper's income was narrow, and **hardly equal** to his wants while living alone. It occurred to him that he might probably find a place in Mr. Unwin's family as a boarder. This was soon arranged, and he went to

his new residence with great thankfulness. The family consisted of the father, a son and daughter, and the mother, the daughter of a draper at Ely; and, as Cowper describes her in a letter to his friend Joseph Hill, a woman of a very uncommon understanding, who had read much to excellent purpose, and was more polite than a duchess. This was the MARY, immortalized in prose and verse, who tended Cowper in all his sad vicissitudes of sorrow and suffering for nearly thirty years, and who regarded him with a friendship so truly Christian, that he could almost fancy his own mother restored to life again. The period of Cowper's sadly chequered life on which the feeling heart can look with pleasure, was certainly the few years from 1765 to 1773. We have records of his mind during those years; we find alternations of hopes and fears, of conflict and of peace; but these were the precious exercises of a renewed mind; it was like Paul crying out, "O wretched man that I am," but soon replacing such groans with the triumphant song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Cowper was not seeking peace where it could not be found: the gay and idle world had no charms for him; he wished for solitude and retirement, and gave vent to his feelings in strains like these:

RETIREMENT.

Far from the world, O Lord, I flee
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still,
His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem by thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow thee.

There, if thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh with what peace, and joy, and love
She communes with her God !

There, like the nightingale she pours
Her solitary lays ;
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

The happy domestic circle of the Unwins at Huntingdon did not long continue unbroken. Mr. Unwin, in going to his church on the morning of Sunday the 8th of July, 1767, was flung from his horse, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of his scull, was carried to a poor cottage about a mile from his home, and there died in great agony on the following Thursday evening.

The daughter being soon afterwards married to Mr. Powley, a clergyman, at Dewsbury, in Yorkshire ; and the son going to Cambridge, the widow and Mr. Cowper resolved to leave a place so utterly changed for them, and to find a new abode in some other spot. An eminent clergyman, Dr. Conyers, had met young Unwin at Cambridge some months before, and had learned his state of mind, and his mother's religious character. He named both to Mr. Newton of Olney, requesting him, when passing through Huntingdon, to call on Mrs. Unwin. That visit took place a few days after Mr. Unwin's death. They determined to fix their future abode at Olney. Mr. Newton engaged a house for them at that place, and there Cowper and Mrs. Unwin arrived on the 14th of October, 1767.

IV. FIRST PERIOD OF HIS RESIDENCE AT OLNEY.

A.D. 1767—1773.

WHAT between Cowper, Newton and Mrs. Unwin, to whom we may add Moses Browne the friend of Hervey, and Thomas Scott the Commentator, OLNEY has become a classical and a household word, sacred to friendship, to poetry, and religion; and the very mention of it calls forth our sympathy with some of the finest and saddest feelings of human nature. Many foolish reproaches have been uttered against John Newton, as if he, by a stern theology and harsh temper, had been the cause of Cowper's first mental alienation, or of his subsequent attacks. But such insinuations are utterly groundless. For several years, Cowper was truly happy at Olney.

He entered heartily into all Newton's plans and proceedings, attended his weekly meetings for reading the Scriptures and for prayer, and even took a part in the exercises. Newton says: "The Lord evidently sent him to Olney, where he has been a blessing to many, a great blessing to myself." Cowper at this time says: "God has given me such a deep, impressed persuasion of the truth, as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives me a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light." On this question, we are quite willing to take the testimony of the two persons most concerned, and who knew their own feelings best; and this, in preference to all the cavils and speculations of small poets and profligate wits, who are totally unable to understand what they so confidently write about.

In March, 1770, Cowper's brother, John, died at Cambridge; and he had the unspeakable satisfaction of

finding that he died in the same faith and hope which were at that time his own happy possession. To this brother's character, he beautifully alludes in the second book of the "Task :"

I had a brother once—
Peace to the memory of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of morals too.
He graced a College, in which order yet
Was sacred, and was honoured, loved, and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.

At Olney, Cowper's occupations as an unwearied assistant to his friend Newton, were abundant. He was an active visitor and reliever of the poor, having the assistance of Mr. Thornton's purse. Newton says of him, "He loved the poor. He often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses ; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers."

Andrew Fuller, a consummate judge of such matters, thus testifies : " At Olney he continued for a number of years in the enjoyment of religious pleasures, to a degree seldom known ; uniting in social prayer-meetings with Mr. Newton and his friends, to the wonder and admiration of all that heard him. I know a person who heard him pray frequently at these meetings, and have heard him say, ' Of all the men that I ever heard pray, no one equalled Mr. Cowper.' "

With the desire of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere Christians, and also to form a monument for perpetuating the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship, Newton proposed the joint composi-

tion of the well-known Olney Hymns. So intimate was the friendship, that for years there was no day in which they did not spend some portion of their time together ; and as the parsonage house was close upon Cowper's garden, they had a door struck out, so that they could visit each other without going through the street.

V. SECOND PERIOD OF HIS RESIDENCE AT OLNEY.

A.D. 1773—1786.

IN 1773, this period of sunshine and peace was disastrously overclouded. The same scene that was acted at St. Alban's, opened upon him at Olney, only covered with a deeper shade of melancholy, and ordained to be of longer duration. It is affecting to think, that a good man is no more secured from such attacks of mental disease, than he is from palsy or fever ; and he is as blameless in the one case as in the other, except so far as he may have unwisely managed himself in the precious hours of sanity and health. Perhaps Cowper devoted himself too much to Newton's employments, to the neglect of needful open air and exercise. At all events, he was, as he told his cousin, suddenly reduced from his wonted rate of understanding to an almost childish imbecility. He had also symptoms which we often see in such cases ; the belief that every one about him hated him, Mrs. Unwin especially ; and that his food was poisoned. It was in January 1773, when he felt that the dreadful attack was impending, that he composed the ever-memorable Hymn, which begins with, "God moves," etc. Among other doleful fancies which possessed his mind, there was one which we can

hardly help ascribing to the direct power of the Tempter, namely, that it was the will of God, that he should, after the example of Abraham, perform an expensive act of obedience, and offer not a son, but himself. He believed that when the will of Heaven was made known to him, power had been given at the same time to accomplish the act of obedience; but having let the opportunity go by, he thought he was doomed to a state of desertion and perpetual misery. In his rational days, he was too good a Calvinist not to be persuaded of the perseverance of saints; but in his insane views, he believed himself to be the only exception in the purposes of God; and he told his friend Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, who had given him friendly advice to join in acts of worship and praise, that there was not a man upon earth that might not be the better for it, himself only excepted. This sad conviction of his being a hopeless outcast from the mercy of God, never wholly left him while life endured. He might recover from the dark cloud of melancholy, so far as to write the noblest and sweetest poetry, to be a delightful companion and correspondent, to have the most exquisite taste for all that was beautiful in nature, ingenious in art, or polished in literature; but amidst all the variations of his mental or bodily health, this awful impression kept its ground. In 1781, he thus writes: "My thoughts are clad in a sober livery, for the most part as grave as that of a bishop's servants; they turn too upon spiritual subjects; but the tallest fellow, and the loudest among them all, is he who is continually crying with a loud voice, *Actum est de te; periisti. All is over with thee; thou art lost.*"

The last letter of his printed correspondence is addressed to Newton six-and-twenty years after the

catastrophe of 1773, and it contains these words—he is speaking of the hopes he once had of spending an eternity with the spirits of good men—"But I was little aware that a storm was at hand, which in one terrible moment would darken, and in another still more terrible, blot out that prospect for ever." A few weeks before that last of his letters, he had composed the last also of his original poems, in which he compared his own case to that of a seaman of Anson's ship, who fell overboard in a dark and stormy night, and was drowned :

Obscurest night involved the sky, etc.

In the early part of his illness, in 1773, he fixed himself in Newton's house, from which nothing but force could have removed him ; and after fourteen months he suddenly consented to return home. He amused himself with taming the three hares, who became famous as never hares were before or since ; he also engaged in desultory composition ; but gardening was his chief employment. In 1780, his history as a poet really commences. Mrs. Unwin encouraged him to try his powers for moral satire in a poem of some length ; and the poem entitled the "Progress of Error" was his first production of that kind. This was rapidly followed by "Truth," "Table Talk," "Expostulation," and afterwards by "Conversation" and "Retirement ;" and these, with the addition of a few shorter pieces, made up a very decent volume, which was published under the title of "Poems by William Cowper, Esq., of the Inner Temple." Of this volume and of his other works, we shall speak afterwards.

Mr. Newton having left Olney for London, Cowper was deprived of the presence of that friend, who had been his greatest attraction to that sequestered town ;

and with whom he had had the most affectionate intercourse for more than twelve years. He felt the bereavement very deeply ; and wrote to Mrs. Newton, " If I were in a condition to leave Olney too, I certainly would not stay in it." The monotony of his life was varied for a time by the appearance at Olney of two ladies, Mrs. Jones, the wife of a clergyman at Clifton, in the neighbourhood, and her sister Lady Austen, widow of a baronet, a lady of great liveliness and accomplishment, to whom we are indebted for Cowper's producing some of his most celebrated pieces. One evening, when he was in a gloomy mood, she related to him the story of John Gilpin ; and he turned it into verse in the course of the night. The "Rose," the verses on the Royal George, and greater than all, "The Task," were the fruits of her suggestion. She pressed him to try his powers in blank verse. He pleaded the want of a subject. Oh ! she exclaimed, you can never be in want of a subject ; you can write upon any—write upon this Sofa. He literally obeyed her injunction, began to write upon the "Sofa," and expanded his thoughts into the varied and noble poem, with which every English mind is so thoroughly familiar. Its popularity from the first was rapid and unbounded ; it was read in the parlour, and quoted in the senate ; and admired wherever there existed a taste for rural scenery or domestic comfort. It is well known that the country walk described in the first book of the "Task" is the very walk with which the poet was quite familiar ; and it is pleasant to know that it subsists at this day in a condition not greatly changed from what he left it, and that his footsteps may be tracked with great ease and certainty. A few years ago, the writer performed

a pilgrimage to Olney ; and never could we desire a more pleasing proof of the power of genius to shed lustre on a spot where an ordinary and careless eye would see nothing to arrest its attention. Striking to the right of the road between Olney and Weston, we soon get among copse and brushwood ; and on a little eminence we see the Peasant's Nest. That spot no longer retains its primitive solitude and simplicity, but is changed into a modern farm-house and offices : of course *its* romance is lost ; but the rest of the poet's walk remains as he saw it. There is the chestnut colonnade, the sudden steep, the gulf over which we pass by the rustic bridge, the alcove at the summit, its panels defaced by rural carvers, *with characters uncouth and spelt amiss*. Of the next stage of the walk, we shall give the description and criticism in the words of Hugh Miller, who also had made a pilgrimage in 1845, to the scenes upon which Cowper has conferred celebrity. "In passing upwards," says Mr. Miller, "along the sides of the park, we have got into a noble avenue of limes, tall as York Minster, and very considerably longer, for the vista diminishes till the lofty arch seems reduced to a mere doorway ; the smooth glossy trunks form stately columns ; and the branches interlacing, high over head, a magnificent roof.

"How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems ! while beneath
The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
Brushed by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves
Play wanton every moment, every spot.

“What exquisite description! And who, acquainted with Cowper, ever walked in a wood when the sun shone, and the wind rustled the leaves, without realizing it? It was too dead a calm to-day to show me the dancing light and shadow where the picture had first been so happily taken; the feathery outline of the foliage lay in diluted black, moveless on the grass; but all else was present, just as Cowper had described half a century before.” Thus far Mr. Miller; the writer’s visit was more fortunate. The day was bright and beautiful, the sun shone out clearly, a fine fresh breeze played among the leaves; and the whole scene attested the describer to be the true painter of nature.

If the poet has made the outdoor scenery famous, not less does the humble dwelling at Olney demonstrate the omnipotence of genius. You enter a very small common-place room, of which you could almost touch the sides with your outstretched arms; yet this is the room where the bard of “fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,” bids us—

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

His own account of the “Task” is this: “Except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency—to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.” But, alas! it is not many who have this rural ease and leisure in their power. Life is a scene of

stern labour and incessant care to the great majority of mankind ; happy they who have learned, in whatsoever state they are, to be therewith content.

Cowper's own long-felt desire for retirement is thus beautifully narrated :

Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall,
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress, her wrongs ;
To monarchs, dignity ; to judges, sense ;
To artists, ingenuity and skill ;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished.

The former volume of poems published by Cowper had not excited much attention. The subjects were too grave and unattractive for those who read only for amusement ; and the style and flow of the verse was different from the insipid sing-song into which English poetry had fallen. But when the "Task" came to buoy up its unfortunate brother, it was found that a poet had arisen of unquestionable genius, in whose manly, though sometimes unpolished lines, was to be found a vast variety of deeply interesting topics, treated in the most instructive and entertaining manner ; and imparting views of human life and character with a truth and vigour which nothing could impart, except an accurate and heartfelt knowledge of the word of God. We cannot here enumerate the varied riches of his

poems ; even to recite the arguments prefixed to each would make a long digression.

Independently of what religion did for Cowper's genuine, though often interrupted, peace of mind, we cannot help admiring the vast benefit it conferred upon him as a man of genius, and as a benefactor to mankind. He who for many years was nothing but a drawing-room trifler or a dissipated frequenter of clubs, became the most instructive and pleasing of writers, and the author of works which will be read and admired as far and as long as the English language extends.

It would open too extensive a field to attempt any criticism of Cowper's works. Not to mention the sixty-eight Olney Hymns, he is the author of a great number of short poems, excellent from their beautiful lyric measures and interesting subjects. We must not forget, among the other merits of Cowper as an author, his admirable powers of letter-writing. Southey calls him the most popular poet of his generation, and the best of English letter-writers.

But we must hasten to the conclusion of his personal history. The "Task" was begun in the summer of 1783, and published in June, 1785. It is painful to read some of his letters, written while it was in progress. "Here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself, and with the least disturbance to others." (To N., July 27, 1783.) "Nature revives again, but a soul once slain lives no more." (To N., Jan. 13, 1784.) "Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement."

VI. HIS REMOVAL FROM OLNEY, AND RESIDENCE AT WESTON.

A.D. 1786—1795.

HE now renewed his correspondence with his family, and was made happy by a letter from his cousin Harriet, now a widow by the title of Lady Hesketh. She paid him a visit at Olney, in June, 1786. Her arrival, which was ushered in with the ringing of the bells, made him and Mrs. Unwin happier than ever they were before. She soon discovered the faults and discomforts of his abode, surrounded by not very desirable neighbours, and she determined on removing him to a more suitable residence. The vicarage in the village of Weston happened to be vacant. She did not leave them till she had arranged everything for their removal to Weston; and when she returned to London, in November, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin finally quitted Olney as a place of abode. Soon after their removal, they sustained a sad affliction in the death of young Unwin, who died at Winchester, of typhus-fever, leaving a widow and three young children. Cowper now began to translate Homer. Some of his friends would have liked better that he had chosen original composition, or some other employment; but he says, extreme distress of spirit drove him to lay Homer before him, and translate for amusement. In 1787, a nervous fever hung about him for a long time, and his mental state was more dreadful than even in 1773; but, happily, few particulars remain to torture the sensibility of those who love and admire the oft-tried sufferer.

Here is a slight sketch of this attack in a letter to Newton:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. Had I been afflicted with a fever, or confined by a broken bone, neither of these cases would have made it impossible that we should meet. I am truly sorry that the impediment was insurmountable while it lasted ; for such, in fact, it was. The sight of any face, except Mrs. Unwin's, was to me an insupportable grievance ; and when it has happened that, by *forcing* himself into my hiding-place, some friend has found me out, he has had no great cause to exult in his success, as Mr. Bull can tell you. From this dreadful condition of mind I emerged suddenly ; so suddenly, that Mrs. Unwin, having no notice of such a change herself, could give none to anybody ; and when it obtained, how long it might last, or how far it was to be depended on, was a matter of the greatest uncertainty."

A request personally made by the parish-clerk of All Saints, in Northampton, who walked over to Weston on purpose, for some verses to prefix to the annual bill of mortality of that town, was the occasion of some very beautiful and serious odes by Cowper, for several successive years. "A fig for poets," says he, "who write epitaphs upon individuals ! I have written *one* that serves *two hundred* persons."

His mother's relations in Norfolk now began to inquire after him ; and in one of them, John Johnson, a student at Cambridge, he received a new and younger friend, whose ardent attachment was one main support of the last ten years of his life. Having observed with what affection Cowper spoke of his mother, Johnson persuaded Mrs. Bodham, her niece, to send to Cowper the only portrait in existence of his beloved relative. Who does not know the poem, "On the receipt of my mother's

picture out of Norfolk, the gift of my cousin, Anne Bodham?" Who would not wish to retain every line of it?

It was a kind dispensation of Providence that brought new friends to him; for advancing years, accidents, and infirmities, were making havoc on Mrs. Unwin. In January, 1789, she had a fall on the ice, in the garden walk, which crippled her for a long time; and a succession of headaches ended in a palsy which struck her in December, 1791. She had a second attack in May, 1792; and mercifully for both, Hayley, a newly-acquired friend, was then on a visit to Weston. Hayley was one of the small poets at the end of the last century; but he was a kind and good natured-man, and, as Cowper says, was all in all to them on this very afflictive occasion. From this period, to the end of Cowper's life, all is unmingled sadness and gloom. In the summer of the same year, he ventured to visit Earham, the seat of Mr. Hayley, 120 miles from Weston, a tremendous exploit as he calls it, undertaken partly to gratify Hayley, and chiefly in the hope of Mrs. Unwin's health being improved by the change. The place was almost a paradise, and their reception was the kindest that it was possible for friendship and hospitality to contrive. Little good resulted to either from the visit.

In 1794, John Johnson came from Norfolk, and assisted Lady Hesketh in her arduous task of waiting on the two helpless invalids. After the young man had departed, Cowper was in the most doleful state, and he refused food and medicine, so that his friend, the Rev. Mr. Greathead, of Newport Pagnell, urgently requested Hayley's assistance. He immediately repaired to Weston; and while he was there, an intimation was

received from Lord Spencer, that a pension of 300*l.* a year was to be granted to Mr. Cowper, payable to Rose as his trustee. But this intelligence, so welcome to his friends, imparted not even a glimmering of joy to the dejected poet.

VII. HIS REMOVAL TO NORFOLK.—HIS DEATH.

A.D. 1795—1800.

ON the 28th of July, 1795, Mr. Johnson, with the full approval of Lady Hesketh, removed the two invalids to Norfolk, intending their absence to be temporary ; but to Weston they never returned. The last original piece composed at that place, was the affecting poem, of which the burden in each verse is “My Mary.”

Thy spirits have a fainter flow ;
I see thee daily weaker grow—
’Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary !

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov’st,
That now at every step thou mov’st
Upheld by two, yet still thou lov’st,
My Mary !

The third day of their journey brought them to North Tuddenham, in Norfolk. Here they were comfortably accommodated with an untenanted parsonage-house, in which they were received by Miss Johnson and Miss Perowne, one of those excellent beings, says Hayley, whom Nature seems to have formed expressly for the purpose of alleviating the sorrows of the afflicted. His kinsman prevailed on Cowper to make frequent excursions in the vicinity of Tuddenham Parsonage,

one of which he extended to the house of his cousin, Mrs. Bodham, at Mattishall. The sight of his own portrait, painted by Abbott, in one of the apartments of that residence, awakening in his mind a recollection of the comparatively happy moments in which he sat for the picture, extorted from him a passionately expressed wish, that similar sensations might yet return.

Mr. Johnson hoping that a removal to the sea-side might be of benefit to the two invalids, he conducted them to the village of Mundsley, on the Norfolk coast. But the coldness of the blasts, and the irritation of the salt spray, occasioned an inflammation in his eyelids, which threatened to confine him entirely. The health, if not the spirits of Cowper, were benefited by the residence at Mundsley; but the infirmities of Mrs. Unwin continued the same. In their excursions from Mundsley, they had visited Dunham Lodge, a vacant seat on a high ground, in the neighbourhood of Swaffham. His kinsman, thinking it a more eligible situation for his interesting charge than his own house at Dereham, was induced to become the tenant of it; and in the course of the month of October, 1795, they removed to Dunham Lodge. In the month of April, 1796, Mrs. Unwin received a visit from her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Powley; and it was a gratifying spectacle to them to see their venerable parent watched over by Cowper, even in his darkest periods of depression. No apparent benefit having resulted from the walks, both marine and inland, which had been fully tried, the invalids and their attendants returned to Dereham. The life of Mrs. Unwin was now drawing to a close. The powers of nature were gradually exhausted, and she expired on the 17th of

December, 1796. The precise moment of her departure was so tranquil, that it was only marked by the cessation of her breath, as the clock was striking one in the afternoon. In the morning of that day, Cowper had anxiously inquired of the servant, "Sally, is there life above stairs?" In the dusk of the evening, when only an indistinct view of the body could be obtained, his kinsman attended him to the chamber of his departed friend. After looking at the corpse for a few moments, he started suddenly away, with a vehement but unfinished sentence of passionate sorrow, and never afterwards spoke of Mrs. Unwin. She was buried on the 23d of December, in the north aisle of the church of East Dereham.

The extreme dejection of Cowper still continued, mitigated a little by his revising Homer, and by hearing various books read to him. On the 8th of March, 1799, he completed the revisal of his Homer, and next day produced his last original poem, which has all the poetical finish of his best days. It is entitled "The Castaway." The subject is a melancholy one; it is an incident narrated in "Anson's Voyage" of one of their best seamen being washed overboard on a stormy night, and their being unable to render him any assistance. Cowper compares his case to the sailor's, but thinks his own the worst:

We perished, each alone;
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

In January, 1800, his weakness assumed a dropsical appearance in the ankles and feet, and continued to increase till the 25th of April, on which day he re-

mained insensible for twelve hours ; and about five in the afternoon, he expired in so mild and gentle a manner, that the precise moment of his departure was unobserved.

On the 2d of May, his funeral was attended by several of his relations, and he was buried in St. Edmund's Chapel, in the church of East Dereham, Norfolk.

His aspiration at one period of his life was to be buried at Weston or Olney :

At last,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke,
Dismiss me weary, to a safe retreat
Beneath the turf that I have often trode.

The wish was congenial to his gentle and retiring spirit ; but his admiring countrymen would desire for him a more magnificent resting-place, even in that temple where England has deposited so many of the noblest of her poets, her warriors, and her statesmen, and where the illustrious dead are honoured by the nations. The ashes of COWPER ought to repose in Westminster Abbey.

Fancy can hardly forbear to imagine the glad surprise which would strike his disenthralled spirit when he found himself in the presence of that Saviour whom he had thoroughly trusted in his days of power, and of love, and of a sound mind ; with whom he was to spend an eternity, where there is no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain ; for the former things are passed away.

CORRESPONDENTS OF COWPER.

JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

HILL was a schoolfellow of Cowper at Westminster, and a club-companion in after-days ; and their friendship was most cordial. Hill did not trifle long, but applied himself diligently and successfully to the profession of the law ; and by the assistance and patronage of Thurlow, he attained a position of respectability and competence. At a late period of Cowper's life, he made Thurlow acquainted with the narrowness of the poet's circumstances, previously to which the Chancellor thought that as he was famous as a poet, he must also be rich. Probably in consequence of Hill's information, a pension was granted to Cowper, but untappily too late for him to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing it had been bestowed, though very useful as enabling his friends to add to his comforts. When Cowper left St. Alban's, Hill took charge of his pecuniary affairs. To Hill, Cowper addressed a very lively poetical epistle, beginning—

Dear Joseph—five-and-twenty years ago—
Alas, how time escapes ! 'tis even so ;

and it ends by describing him as

An honest man, close-buttoned to the chin,
Broadcloth without, and a warm heart within.

LADY HESKETH.

The wife of Sir Thomas Hesketh was a cousin of Cowper, and the daughter of his uncle, Mr. Ashley Cowper. Her sister Theodora, between whom and Cowper there was a mutual attachment (see the Life), though her father did not deem it prudent for them to marry, remained single till her death, which happened in October, 1824. Her sister Harriet, Lady Hesketh, with the most unfailing kindness, did all in her power to alleviate the sufferings and to increase the comforts of Cowper, of which many proofs will be found in his letters. In one of them he describes her as coming to him at Weston, accompanied with her ever-attendant train, fine sense, good temper, affectionate cordiality, and ever-pleasing vivacity.*

GENERAL AND MRS. COWPER.

Major, afterwards General Cowper, was a cousin of the poet's, and married to the sister of Martin Madan, chaplain to the Lock Hospital. Mrs. Cowper's religious

* Spencer Cowper, the grandfather of these two ladies, and also of the poet, was Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. While yet a barrister, he was tried, along with three other persons, on an accusation of murdering a young Quaker lady of Hertford, by drowning her in a mill-dam. The trial is yet remarkable in the history of medical jurisprudence as one of the *causes célèbres* of England. The jury found them Not Guilty, to the general satisfaction of all who heard of the verdict. The whole affair was thought to have been brought forward from factious motives, during the bitter contentions in the elections for a new parliament in the summer of 1699. When on the bench, Judge Cowper distinguished himself by the humanity which he never failed to show to unhappy men who stood, as he had once stood, at the bar.

opinions were truly pious and evangelical; and she was fully qualified to enter into the grateful feelings of Cowper, when he related to her the peace and joy he had obtained by cordially believing the gospel. Some of Cowper's most experimental letters soon after his conversion are addressed to Mrs. Cowper.

THE REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN.

When, after leaving St. Alban's, Cowper was a solitary stranger at Huntingdon, the kind heart of young Unwin was deeply struck with his interesting appearance. In spite of discouragements, he introduced himself to Cowper, who was delighted to find in him a congenial spirit, that could fully enter into all his joyful feelings in the recently found consolations of the gospel. Unwin introduced him to his father's family, of which he soon became an inmate; and with one of whom, the mother of his young friend, his future life was permanently entwined. Mr. Unwin afterwards became the rector of Stock in Essex; and when Cowper first appeared as an author, he concluded his volume by an address to his friend, expressing the warmest feelings of affection:—

UNWIN, I should but ill repay
The kindness of a friend,
Whose worth deserves as warm a lay
As Friendship ever penned,
Thy name omitted in a page,
That would reclaim a vicious age.

* * * *

Not rich, I render what I may;
I seize thy name in haste,
And place it in this first essay,
Lest it should prove the last:

'Tis where it should be—in a plan
That holds in view the good of man.

The poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the poet's heart :
Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blazed by art.
No Muses on these lines attend :
I sink the poet in the friend.

To Unwin he dedicated his "Tirocinium, or Review of Schools;" and some of the finest of his literary letters are addressed to him, who was fully qualified to appreciate their excellence. This amiable man died of a fever, at Winchester, at the early age of forty-one.

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Of this eminent minister, and favourite correspondent of Cowper, little needs to be said. His life and character are universally known ; his praise is in all the churches ; or rather, all Christian men adore that grace which lifted him from the depths of vice and misery to be a conspicuous example of holy living and usefulness, and a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. For his sake, Cowper fixed his residence at Olney ; to him, when removed to London, some of the most affectionate of his correspondence is addressed ; and the last preserved letter of Cowper, not very long before his death, is one to Newton.

THE REV. WILLIAM BULL, OF NEWPORT PAGNELL.

When Mr. Newton left Olney, he introduced to the poet Mr. Bull, an Independent minister, of Newport Pagnell, a small town about five miles from Olney, who

thenceforward became a weekly visitant. Newton doubtless expected that Mr. Bull would be what himself had been to Cowper, his nearest male friend and counsellor. He was, indeed, most acceptable to the poet, who thus describes him to Unwin: "A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; a master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it; an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party: at other times, he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions, in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one; and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either: it can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull."

SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Mr. Rose was the son of Dr. William Rose, who kept a school at Chiswick, and was connected with the *Monthly Review*. Young Rose made the acquaintance of Cowper when he was about twenty, having gone out of his way six miles to see the poet, when on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the University there. He came partly to satisfy his own curiosity; but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring Cowper the thanks of some of the Scotch professors for his two

volumes. The poet warmly accepted the friendship of his young admirer ; afterwards wrote him some most judicious letters about his conduct and studies ; and, when Cowper's pension was granted, it was made payable to Rose as his trustee.

MRS. KING OF PERTENHALL, NEAR KIMBOLTON.

This lady was once intimate with Cowper's brother ; and in the beginning of the year 1788, she sent to him some manuscript poems of John Cowper in his own handwriting. They were received with much pleasure, and several very affectionate letters were written to Mrs. King : one in particular is most interesting, as giving an autobiography from his illness in 1763 up to the period of March, 1788. Her husband, Mr. King, was entered of Benet (now called Corpus) College, Cambridge, in 1741 ; of which College John Cowper was fellow. In 1752, Mr. King was instituted to the rectory of Pertenhall, which he resigned in 1800 ; but continued to reside in the rectory with his cousin and successor in the living, Professor Martyn, till his death, in October, 1812. Mr. and Mrs. King visited Cowper at Weston. Mrs. King died in 1793.

REV. WALTER BAGOT.

When Cowper began to translate Homer, many literary men, some of them his former acquaintance, became interested in himself and his labours. Among these was the Rev. Walter Bagot, who called upon him at Olney, and sent him a note from the inn, requesting him to accept an early subscription to his Homer, a draft for twenty pounds. A friendship which had

slept for more than thirty years was thus most earnestly revived. "The brothers," says Cowper of the Bagots, "were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were." One of them, Lewis Bagot, was successively Bishop of Bristol, Norwich, and St. Asaph: another, Walter, was the correspondent of Cowper.

JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

In January, 1790, Mr. Johnson (who afterwards took orders), who had hitherto enjoyed no personal intercourse with his relative, but for whom, ten years after, was reserved the melancholy office of closing his eyes, introduced himself to the poet, as the grandson of his mother's brother, the Rev. Roger Donne, late rector of Catfield, in Norfolk. Cowper's total ignorance of what had befallen that branch of his family during the twenty-seven years of his retirement from the world, would of itself have secured his attention to a visitor so circumstanced; and the reception which his kinsman met with was peculiarly pleasing. The consequence was a repetition of his visit in the same year. At the Lodge of Weston, Mr. Johnson passed the chief of his academical recesses, and his clerical leisure afterwards; until, by the kindest of arrangements, he, in the year 1795, transplanted the helpless sufferer, with his enfeebled companion, Mrs. Unwin, into Norfolk.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

SELECTION

FROM THE

LETTERS OF WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.



THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.



HUNTINGDON.

I.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ. Cook's Court, Carey Street, London.

ACCOUNT OF HIS SITUATION AT HUNTINGDON—A FAITHFUL
SERVANT—THE RIVER OUSE.

DEAR JOE,

Huntingdon, June 24, 1765.

THE only recompense I can make you for your kind
attention to my affairs during my illness, is to tell you,

that by the mercy of God I am restored to perfect health both of mind and body. This I believe will give you pleasure ; and I would gladly do anything from which you could receive it.

I left St. Alban's on the 17th, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the 22d. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions : we have had many worse, and, except the size of it (which, however, is sufficient for a single man), but few better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St. Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says, he kept no servant, because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine, because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them ; but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow.

The river Ouse (I forget how they spell it) is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world : at this town it is, I believe, as wide as the Thames at Windsor ; nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks, these being attributes which in strict truth belong to neither. Fluellin would say, they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task will cost you no great pains to execute :

particularly remember me to those of your own house,
and believe me,

Your very affectionate

W. C.

II.

To LADY HESKETH.

ON HIS OWN ILLNESS AND RECOVERY.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

Huntingdon, July 1, 1765.

SINCE the visit you were so kind as to pay me in the Temple, (the only time I ever saw you without pleasure), what have I not suffered ! And since it has pleased God to restore me to the use of my reason, what have I not enjoyed ! You know, by experience, how pleasant it is to feel the first approaches of health after a fever ; but, oh, the fever of the brain ! To feel the quenching of that fire is indeed a blessing, which I think it impossible to receive without the most consummate gratitude. Terrible as this chastisement is, I acknowledge in it the hand of an infinite justice ; nor is it at all more difficult for me to perceive in it the hand of an infinite mercy likewise : when I consider the effect it has had upon me, I am exceedingly thankful for it ; and, without hypocrisy, esteem it the greatest blessing, next to life itself, I ever received from the Divine bounty. I pray God that I may ever retain this sense of it, and then I am sure I shall continue to be, as I am at present, really happy.

I write thus to you that you may not think me a forlorn and wretched creature ; which you might be apt to do, considering my very distant removal from every friend I have in the world ; a circumstance

which, before this event befell me, would undoubtedly have made me so: but my affliction has taught me a road to happiness which without it I should never have found; and I know, and have experience of it every day, that the mercy of God, to him who believes himself the object of it, is more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of every other blessing.

You may now inform all those whom you think really interested in my welfare, that they have no need to be apprehensive on the score of my happiness at present. And you yourself will believe that my happiness is no dream, because I have told you the foundation on which it is built. What I have written would appear like enthusiasm to many, for we are apt to give that name to every warm affection of the mind in others which we have not experienced in ourselves; but to you, who have so much to be thankful for, and a temper inclined to gratitude, it will not appear so.

I beg you will give my love to Sir Thomas, and believe that I am obliged to you both for inquiring after me, at St. Alban's.

Yours ever,

W. C.

III.

To LADY HESKETH.

CHANGE OF MIND INDUCED BY HIS RECOVERY—DR. COTTON.

Huntingdon, July 4, 1765.

BEING just emerged from the Ouse, I sit down to thank you, my dear cousin, for your friendly and comfortable letter. What could you think of my unaccountable behaviour to you in that visit I mentioned in my last? I remember I neither spoke to you, nor

looked at you. The solution of the mystery indeed followed soon after, but at the time it must have been inexplicable. The uproar within was even then begun, and my silence was only the sulkiness of a thunder-storm before it opens. I am glad, however, that the only instance in which I knew not how to value your company was, when I was not in my senses. It was the first of the kind, and I trust in God it will be the last.

How naturally does affliction make us Christians! and how impossible is it when all human help is vain, and the whole earth too poor and trifling to furnish us with one moment's peace, how impossible is it then to avoid looking at the gospel! It gives me some concern, though at the same time it increases my gratitude, to reflect that a convert made in Bedlam is more likely to be a stumbling-block to others, than to advance their faith. But if it has that effect upon any, it is owing to their reasoning amiss, and drawing their conclusions from false premises. He who can ascribe an amendment of life and manners, and a reformation of the heart itself, to madness, is guilty of an absurdity that in any other case would fasten the imputation of madness upon himself; for by so doing he ascribes a reasonable effect to an unreasonable cause, and a positive effect to a negative. But when Christianity only is to be sacrificed, he that stabs deepest is always the wisest man. You, my dear cousin, yourself will be apt to think I carry the matter too far, and that in the present warmth of my heart I make too ample a concession in saying, that I am *only now* a convert. You think I always believed, and I thought so too; but you were deceived, and so was I. I called myself

indeed a Christian ; but He who knows my heart, knows that I never did a right thing, nor abstained from a wrong one, because I was so ; but if I did either, it was under the influence of some other motive. And it is such seeming Christians, such pretending believers, that do most mischief to the cause, and furnish the strongest arguments to support the infidelity of its enemies : unless profession and conduct go together, the man's life is a lie ; and the validity of what he professes, itself is called in question. The difference between a Christian and an unbeliever would be so striking if the treacherous allies of the church would go over at once to the other side, that I am satisfied religion would be no loser by the bargain.

I reckon it one instance of the Providence that has attended me throughout this whole event, that instead of being delivered into the hands of one of the London physicians, who were so much nearer that I wonder I was not, I was carried to Doctor Cotton. I was not only treated by him with the greatest tenderness while I was ill, and attended with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I could open my mind upon the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long neglected point made it necessary that, while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it, as in that which was more immediately his province. How many

physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself; and it is well for me that he was so.

My dear cousin, you know not half the deliverances I have received: my brother is the only one in the family who does. My recovery is indeed a signal one; but a greater, if possible, went before it. My future life must express my thankfulness, for by words I cannot do it.

I pray God to bless you and my friend Sir Thomas.

Yours ever,

W. C.

IV.

To LADY HESKETH.

PLEASED WITH HIS SITUATION—MR. HODGSON, MINISTER OF THE
PARISH—VILLAGE OF HERTFORD—EPITAPH THERE.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

Huntingdon, July 5, 1765.

MY pen runs so fast, you will begin to wish you had not put it in motion, but you must consider we have not met even by letter almost these two years, which will account in some measure for my pestering you in this manner; besides, my last was no answer to yours, and therefore I consider myself as still in your debt. To say truth, I have this long time promised myself a correspondence with you as one of my principal pleasures.

I should have written to you from St. Alban's long since, but was willing to perform quarantine first, both for my own sake, and because I thought my letters

would be more satisfactory to you from any other quarter. You will perceive I allowed myself a very sufficient time for the purpose, for I date my recovery from the 25th of last July, having been ill seven months, and well twelve months. It was on that day my brother came to see me. I was far from well when he came in ; yet, though he only stayed one day with me, his company served to put to flight a thousand deliriums and delusions which I still laboured under, and the next morning I found myself a new creature. But to the present purpose.

As far as I am acquainted with this place, I like it extremely. Mr. Hodgson, the minister of the parish, made me a visit the day before yesterday. He is very sensible, a good preacher, and conscientious in the discharge of his duty. He is very well known to Doctor Newton, Bishop of Bristol, the author of the treatise on the Prophecies, one of our best bishops, and who has written the most demonstrative proof of the truth of Christianity, in my mind, that ever was published.

There is a village called Hertford, about a mile and a half from hence. The church there is very prettily situated upon a rising ground, so close to the river that it washes the wall of the churchyard. I found an epitaph there the other morning, the first two lines of which, being better than anything else I saw there, I made shift to remember. It is by a widow on her husband :

Thou wast too good to live on earth with me,
And I not good enough to die with thee.

The distance of this place from Cambridge is the worst circumstance belonging to it. My brother and I are fifteen miles asunder, which, considering that I

came hither for the sake of being near him, is rather too much. I wish that young man was better known in the family. He has as many good qualities as his nearest kindred could wish to find in him.

As Mr. Quin very roundly expressed himself upon some such occasion, "here is very plentiful accommodation, and great happiness of provision." So that if I starve, it must be through forgetfulness, rather than scarcity.

Fare thee well, my good and dear cousin.

Ever yours,

W. C.

V.

TO LADY HESKETH.

BISHOP NEWTON ON THE PROPHECIES—ANECDOTE OF DR. YOUNG,
AUTHOR OF THE "NIGHT THOUGHTS."

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, July 12, 1765.

You are very good to me, and if you will only continue to write at such intervals as you find convenient, I shall receive all that pleasure which I proposed to myself from our correspondence. I desire no more than that you would never drop me for any great length of time together, for I shall then think you only write because something happened to put you in mind of me, or for some other reason equally mortifying. I am not, however, so unreasonable as to expect you should perform this act of friendship so frequently as myself, for you live in a world swarming with engagements, and my hours are almost all my own. You must every day be employed in doing what is expected from you by a

thousand others, and I have nothing to do but what is most agreeable to myself.

Our mentioning Newton's treatise on the Prophecies brings to my mind an anecdote of Dr. Young, who, you know, died lately at Welwyn. Dr. Cotton, who was intimate with him, paid him a visit about a fortnight before he was seized with his last illness. The old man was then in perfect health ; the antiquity of his person, the gravity of his utterance, and the earnestness with which he discoursed about religion, gave him, in the doctor's eye, the appearance of a prophet. They had been delivering their sentiments upon this book of Newton, when Young closed the conference thus :—
“ My friend, there are two considerations upon which my faith in Christ is built as upon a rock : the fall of man, the redemption of man, and the resurrection of man, the three cardinal articles of our religion, are such as human ingenuity could never have invented ; therefore they must be Divine. The other argument is this : If the prophecies have been fulfilled (of which there is abundant demonstration), the Scripture must be the word of God ; and if the Scripture is the word of God, Christianity must be true.”

This treatise on the Prophecies serves a double purpose : it not only proves the truth of religion, in a manner that never has been nor ever can be controverted ; but it proves likewise, that the Roman Catholic is the apostate and antichristian church, so frequently foretold both in the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, so fatally connected is the refutation of Popery with the truth of Christianity, when the latter is evinced by the completion of the prophecies, that in proportion as light is thrown upon the one, the deformities and

errors of the other are more plainly exhibited. But I leave you to the book itself: there are parts of it which may possibly afford you less entertainment than the rest, because you have never been a schoolboy; but in the main it is so interesting, and you are so fond of that which is so, that I am sure you will like it.

My dear cousin, how happy am I in having a friend to whom I can open my heart upon these subjects! I have many intimates in the world, and have had many more than I shall have hereafter, to whom a long letter upon these most important articles would appear tiresome, at least, if not impertinent. But I am not afraid of meeting with that reception from you, who have never yet made it your interest that there should be no truth in the word of God. May this everlasting truth be your comfort while you live, and attend you with peace and joy in your last moments! I love you too well not to make this a part of my prayers; and when I remember my friends on these occasions, there is no likelihood that you can be forgotten.

Yours ever,

W. C.

P.S. *Cambridge*.—I add this postscript at my brother's rooms. He desires to be affectionately remembered to you, and if you are in town about a fortnight hence, when he proposes to be there himself, will take a breakfast with you.

VI.

To LADY HESKETH.

KINDNESS OF HIS FAMILY—MAJOR COWPER—NOMINAL CHRISTIANS—THE SCRIPTURES.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, August 1, 1765.

IF I was to measure your obligation to write by my own desire to hear from you, I should call you an idle correspondent if a post went by without bringing me a letter ; but I am not so unreasonable : on the contrary, I think myself very happy in hearing from you upon your own terms, as you find most convenient. Your short history of my family is a very acceptable part of your letter : if they really interest themselves in my welfare, it is a mark of their great charity for one who has been a disappointment and a vexation to them ever since he has been of consequence enough to be either. My friend the major's behaviour to me, after all he suffered by my abandoning his interest and my own in so miserable a manner, is a noble instance of generosity and true greatness of mind ; and indeed I know no man in whom those qualities are more conspicuous : one need only furnish him with an opportunity to display them, and they are always ready to show themselves in his words and actions, and even in his countenance, at a moment's warning. I have great reason to be thankful, I have lost none of my acquaintance but those whom I determined not to keep. I am sorry this class is so numerous. What would I not give, that every friend I have in the world were not almost, but altogether, Christians ! My dear cousin, I am half

afraid to talk in this style, lest I should seem to indulge a censorious humour, instead of hoping, as I ought, the best for all men. But what can be said against ocular proof? and what is hope when it is built upon presumption? To use the most Holy Name in the universe for no purpose, or a bad one, contrary to his own express commandment; to pass the day, and the succeeding days, weeks, and months, and years, without one act of private devotion, one confession of our sins, or one thanksgiving for the numberless blessings we enjoy; to hear the word of God in public with a distracted attention, or with none at all; to absent ourselves voluntarily from the blessed communion, and to live in the total neglect of it, though our Saviour has charged it upon us with an express injunction, are the common and ordinary liberties which the generality of professors allow themselves; and what is this but to live without God in the world? Many causes may be assigned for this anti-christian spirit, so prevalent among Christians; but one of the principal I take to be their utter forgetfulness that they have the word of God in their possession.

My friend Sir William Russell was distantly related to a very accomplished man, who, though he never believed the gospel, admired the Scriptures as the sublimest compositions in the world, and read them often. I have been intimate myself with a man of fine taste, who has confessed to me that, though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, yet he never could read St. Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, without being wonderfully affected by it; and he thought that if the stamp of Divinity was anywhere

to be found in Scripture, it was strongly marked and visibly impressed upon that passage. If these men, whose hearts were chilled with the darkness of infidelity, could find such charms in the mere style of the Scripture, what must they find there, whose eye penetrates deeper than the letter, and who firmly believe themselves interested in all the invaluable privileges of the gospel! "He that believeth on me is passed from death unto life," though it be as plain a sentence as words can form, has more beauties in it for such a person than all the labours antiquity can boast of. If my poor man of taste, whom I have just mentioned, had searched a little further, he might have found other parts of the sacred history as strongly marked with the characters of Divinity as that he mentioned. The parable of the prodigal son, the most beautiful fiction that ever was invented; our Saviour's speech to his disciples, with which he closes his earthly ministration, full of the sublimest dignity and tenderest affection, surpass everything that I ever read; and, like the Spirit, by which they were dictated, fly directly to the heart. If the Scripture did not disdain all affectation of ornament, one should call these, and such as these, the ornamental parts of it; but the matter of it is that upon which it principally stakes its credit with us; and the style, however excellent and peculiar to itself, is only one of those many external evidences by which it recommends itself to our belief.

I shall be very much obliged to you for the book you mention; you could not have sent me anything that would have been more welcome, unless you had sent me your own meditations instead of them.

Yours,

W. C.

VII.

To LADY HESKETH.

PEARSALL'S MEDITATIONS—FAITH.

Huntingdon, August 17, 1765.

You told me, my dear cousin, that I need not fear writing too often ; and you perceive I take you at your word. At present, however, I shall do little more than thank you for the Meditations,¹ which I admire exceedingly: the author of them manifestly loved the truth with an undissembled affection, had made a great progress in the knowledge of it, and experienced all the happiness that naturally results from that noblest of all attainments. There is one circumstance, which he gives us frequent occasion to observe in him, which I believe will ever be found in the philosophy of every true Christian: I mean the eminent rank which he assigns to faith among the virtues, as the source and parent of them all. There is nothing more infallibly true than this ; and doubtless it is with a view to the purifying and sanctifying nature of a true faith, that our Saviour says, "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life," with many other expressions to the same purpose. Considered in this light, no wonder it has the power of salvation ascribed to it! Considered in any other, we must suppose it to operate like an oriental talisman, if it obtains for us the least advantage ; which is an affront to him who insists upon our having it, and will on no other terms admit us to his favour. I mention this distinguishing article in

¹ Pearsall's Meditations.

his Reflections the rather, because it serves for a solid foundation to the distinction I made, in my last, between the specious professor and the true believer, between him whose faith is his Sunday-suit and him who never puts it off at all ; a distinction I am a little fearful sometimes of making, because it is a heavy stroke upon the practice of more than half the Christians in the world.

My dear cousin, I told you I read the book with great pleasure, which may be accounted for from its own merit ; but perhaps it pleased me the more because you had travelled the same road before me. You know there is such a pleasure as this, which would want great explanation to some folks—being, perhaps, a mystery to those whose hearts are a mere muscle, and serve only for the purposes of an even circulation.

W. C.

VIII.

To LADY HESKETH.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF TWO OF HIS FRIENDS—ON A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE—ACCEPTS AN INVITATION FROM HIS COUSIN.

Huntingdon, Sept. 4, 1765.

THOUGH I have some very agreeable acquaintance at Huntingdon, my dear cousin, none of their visits are so agreeable as the arrival of your letters. I thank you for that which I have just received from Droxford ; and particularly for that part of it where you give me an unlimited liberty upon the subject I have already so often written upon. Whatever interests us deeply

as naturally flows into the pen as it does from the lips, when every restraint is taken away, and we meet with a friend indulgent enough to attend to us. How many, in all the variety of characters with whom I am acquainted, could I find after the strictest search, to whom I could write as I do to you? I hope the number will increase. I am sure it cannot easily be diminished.

Poor ——! I have heard the whole of his history, and can only lament what I am sure I can make no apology for. Two of my friends have been cut off, during my illness, in the midst of such a life as it is frightful to reflect upon; and here am I, in better health and spirits than I can almost remember to have enjoyed before, after having spent months in the apprehension of instant death. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Why did I receive grace and mercy? Why was I preserved, afflicted for my good, received, as I trust, into favour, and blessed with the greatest happiness I can ever know or hope for in this life, while these were overtaken by the great arrest, unawakened, unrepenting, and every way unprepared for it? His infinite wisdom, to whose infinite mercy I owe it all, can solve these questions, and none beside him. If a free-thinker, as many a man miscalls himself, could be brought to give a serious answer to them, he would certainly say—"Without doubt, sir, you were in great danger, you had a narrow escape, a most fortunate one indeed." How excessively foolish, as well as shocking! As if life depended upon luck, and all that we are or can be, all that we have or hope for, could possibly be referred to accident! Yet to this freedom of thought it is owing that He, who, as our

Saviour tells us, is thoroughly apprised of the death of the meanest of his creatures, is supposed to leave those whom he has made in his own image to the mercy of chance ; and to this, therefore, it is likewise owing that the correction which our heavenly Father bestows upon us, that we may be fitted to receive his blessing, is so often disappointed of its benevolent intention, and that men despise the chastening of the Almighty. Fevers and all diseases are accidents ; and long life, recovery at least from sickness, is the gift of the physician. No man can be a greater friend to the use of means upon these occasions than myself, for it were presumption and enthusiasm to neglect them. God has endued them with salutary properties on purpose that we might avail ourselves of them, otherwise that part of his creation were in vain. But to impute our recovery to the medicine, and to carry our views no further, is to rob God of his honour, and is saying in effect that he has parted with the keys of life and death, and, by giving to a drug the power to heal us, has placed our lives out of his own reach. He that thinks thus may as well fall upon his knees at once and return thanks to the medicine that cured him, for it was certainly more immediately instrumental in his recovery than either the apothecary or the doctor. My dear cousin, a firm persuasion of the superintendence of Providence over all our concerns is absolutely necessary to our happiness. Without it, we cannot be said to believe in the Scripture, or practise anything like resignation to his will. If I am convinced that no affliction can befall me without the permission of God, I am convinced likewise that he sees and knows that I am afflicted ; believing this, I must in the same degree

believe that, if I pray to him for deliverance, he hears me ; I must needs know, likewise, with equal assurance, that, if he hears, he will also deliver me, if that will upon the whole be most conducive to my happiness ; and if he does not deliver me, I may be well assured that he has none but the most benevolent intention in declining it. He made us, not because we could add to his happiness, which was always perfect, but that we might be happy ourselves ; and will he not, in all his dispensations towards us, even in the minutest, consult that end for which he made us ? To suppose the contrary, is (which we are not always aware of) affronting every one of his attributes ; and at the same time, the certain consequence of disbelieving his care for us is, that we renounce utterly our dependence upon him. In this view it will appear plainly that the line of duty is not stretched too tight, when we are told that we ought to accept everything at his hands as a blessing, and to be thankful even while we smart under the rod of iron with which he sometimes rules us. Without this persuasion, every blessing, however we may think ourselves happy in it, loses its greatest recommendation, and every affliction is intolerable. Death itself must be welcome to him who has this faith, and he who has it not must aim at it, if he is not a madman.

You cannot think how glad I am to hear you are going to commence lady and mistress of Freemantle.¹ I know it well, and could go to it from Southampton blindfold. You are kind to invite me to it, and I shall be so kind to myself as to accept the invitation, though

¹ A villa near Southampton.

I should not for a slight consideration be prevailed upon to quit my beloved retirement at Huntingdon.

Yours ever,

W. C.

IX.

To LADY HESKETH.

THE UNWIN FAMILY—ACQUAINTANCE AT HUNTINGDON.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Sept. 14, 1765.

THE longer I live here, the better I like the place, and the people who belong to it. I am upon very good terms with no less than five families, besides two or three odd scrambling fellows like myself. The last acquaintance I made here is with the race of the Unwins, consisting of father and mother, son and daughter, the most comfortable social folks you ever knew. The son is about twenty-one years of age, one of the most unreserved and amiable young men I ever conversed with. He is not yet arrived at that time of life, when suspicion recommends itself to us in the form of wisdom, and sets everything but our own dear selves at an immeasurable distance from our esteem and confidence. Consequently he is known almost as soon as seen; and having nothing in his heart that makes it necessary for him to keep it barred and bolted, opens it to the perusal even of a stranger. The father is a clergyman, and the son is designed for orders. The design, however, is quite his own, proceeding merely from his being, and having always been, sincere, in his belief and love of the gospel. Another ac-

quaintance I have lately made is with a Mr. Nicholson, a north country divine, very poor, but very good, and very happy. He reads prayers here twice a day, all the year round ; and travels on foot to serve two churches every Sunday through the year, his journey out and home again being sixteen miles. I supped with him last night. He gave me bread and cheese, and a black jug of ale of his own brewing, and doubtless brewed by his own hands. Another of my acquaintance is Mr. —, a thin, tall, old man, and as good as he is thin. He drinks nothing but water, and eats no flesh ; partly (I believe) from a religious scruple (for he is very religious), and partly in the spirit of a valetudinarian. He is to be met with every morning of his life, at about six o'clock, at a fountain of very fine water, about a mile from the town, which is reckoned extremely like the Bristol spring. Being both early risers, and the only early walkers in the place, we soon became acquainted. His great piety can be equalled by nothing but his great regularity, for he is the most perfect time-piece in the world. I have received a visit likewise from Mr. —. He is very much a gentleman, well read, and sensible. I am persuaded, in short, that if I had the choice of all England, where to fix my abode, I could not have chosen better for myself ; and most likely I should not have chosen so well.

You say, you hope it is not necessary for salvation, to undergo the same afflictions that I have undergone. No ! my dear cousin. God deals with his children as a merciful father ; he does not, as he himself tells us, afflict willingly the sons of men. Doubtless there are many, who, having been placed by his good providence

out of the reach of any great evil and the influence of bad example, have from their very infancy been partakers of the grace of his Holy Spirit, in such a manner as never to have allowed themselves in any grievous offence against him. May you love him more and more day by day ; as every day, while you think upon him, you will find him more worthy of your love : and may you be finally accepted with him for His sake, whose intercession for all his faithful servants cannot but prevail !

Yours ever,

W. C.

X.

To LADY HESKETH.

HER LONG SILENCE—HIS OWN THANKFUL CONTENTMENT.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Oct. 10, 1765.

I SHOULD grumble at your long silence, if I did not know that one may love one's friends very well, though one is not always in the humour to write to them. Besides, I have the satisfaction of being perfectly sure that you have at least twenty times recollected the debt you owe me, and as often resolved to pay it ; and perhaps while you remain indebted to me, you think of me twice as often as you would do, if the account was clear. These are the reflections with which I comfort myself, under the affliction of not hearing from you : my temper does not incline me to jealousy, and if it did, I should set all right by having recourse to what I have already received from you.

I thank God for your friendship, and for every friend I have ; for all the pleasing circumstances of my situation here, for my health of body, and perfect serenity of mind. To recollect the past, and compare it with the present, is all I have need of to fill me with gratitude ; and to be grateful is to be happy. Not that I think myself sufficiently thankful, or that I shall ever be so in this life. The warmest heart perhaps only feels by fits, and is often as insensible as the coldest. This, at least, is frequently the case with mine, and oftener than it should be. But the mercy that can forgive iniquity will never be severe to mark our frailties ; to that mercy, my dear cousin, I commend you, with earnest wishes for your welfare, and remain your ever affectionate

W. C.

XI.

To LADY HESKETH.

DESCRIPTION OF THE UNWINS.

Huntingdon, October 18, 1765.

I WISH you joy, my dear cousin, of being safely arrived in port from the storms of Southampton. For my own part, who am but as a Thames wherry, in a world full of tempest and commotion, I know so well the value of the creek I have put into, and the snugness it affords me, that I have a sensible sympathy with you in the pleasure you find in being once more blown to Droxford. I know enough of Miss Morley to send her my compliments ; to which, if I had never seen her, her affection for you would sufficiently entitle her. If I

neglected to do it sooner, it is only because I am naturally apt to neglect what I ought to do ; and if I was as genteel as I am negligent, I should be the most delightful creature in the universe.

I am glad you think so favourably of my Huntingdon acquaintance ; they are indeed a nice set of folks, and suit me exactly. I should have been more particular in my account of Miss Unwin, if I had had materials for a minute description. She is about eighteen years of age, rather handsome and genteel. In her mother's company she says little ; not because her mother requires it of her, but because she seems glad of that excuse for not talking, being somewhat inclined to bashfulness. There is the most remarkable cordiality between all the parts of the family ; and the mother and daughter seem to dote upon each other. The first time I went to the house I was introduced to the daughter alone, and sat with her near half an hour, before her brother came in, who had appointed me to call upon him. Talking is necessary in a *tête-à-tête*, to distinguish the persons of the drama from the chairs they sit on : accordingly she talked a great deal, and extremely well ; and, like the rest of the family, behaved with as much ease of address as if we had been old acquaintance. She resembles her mother in her great piety, who is one of the most remarkable instances of it I have ever seen. They are altogether the cheerfulest and most engaging family-piece it is possible to conceive.

Since I wrote the above, I met Mrs. Unwin in the street, and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had a conversation which did me more good than I should have

received from an audience of the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company. I am treated in the family as if I was a near relation, and have been repeatedly invited to call upon them at all times. You know what a shy fellow I am ; I cannot prevail with myself to make so much use of this privilege as I am sure they intend I should ; but perhaps this awkwardness will wear off hereafter. It was my earnest request before I left St. Alban's, that, wherever it might please Providence to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin. How happy it is to believe, with a steadfast assurance, that our petitions are heard even while we are making them ; and how delightful to meet with a proof of it in the effectual and actual grant of them ! Surely it is a gracious finishing given to those means, which the Almighty has been pleased to make use of for my conversion. After having been deservedly rendered unfit for any society, to be again qualified for it, and admitted at once into the fellowship of those whom God regards as the excellent of the earth, and whom, in the emphatical language of Scripture, he preserves as the apple of his eye, is a blessing which carries with it the stamp and visible superscription of Divine bounty—a grace unlimited as undeserved ; and, like its glorious Author, free in its course, and blessed in its operation.

My dear cousin, health and happiness, and above all, the favour of our great and gracious Lord, attend you ! While we seek it in spirit and in truth, we are infinitely more secure of it than of the next breath we expect to draw. Heaven and earth have their destined

periods ; ten thousand worlds will vanish at the consummation of all things ; but the word of God standeth fast ; and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

My love to all who inquire after me.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

XII.

To MAJOR COWPER, at the Park House, near Hartford.

HIS PERFECT CONTENTMENT AT HUNTINGDON.

MY DEAR MAJOR,

Huntingdon, October 18, 1765.

I HAVE neither lost the use of my fingers nor my memory, though my unaccountable silence might incline you to suspect that I had lost both. The history of those things which have, from time to time, prevented my scribbling, would not only be insipid but extremely voluminous ; for which reasons they will not make their appearance at present, nor probably at any time hereafter. If my neglecting to write to you were a proof that I had never thought of you, and that had been really the case, five shillings a piece would have been much too little to give for the sight of such a monster ; but I am no such monster, nor do I perceive in myself the least tendency to such a transformation. You may recollect that I had but very uncomfortable expectations of the accommodation I should meet with at Huntingdon. How much better is it to take our lot, where it shall please Providence to cast it, without anxiety ! Had I chosen for myself, it is impossible I

could have fixed upon a place so agreeable to me in all respects. I so much dreaded the thought of having a new acquaintance to make, with no other recommendation than that of being a perfect stranger, that I heartily wished no creature here might take the least notice of me. Instead of which, in about two months after my arrival, I became known to all the visitable people here, and do verily think it the most agreeable neighbourhood I ever saw.

Here are three families who have received me with the utmost civility ; and two in particular have treated me with as much cordiality as if their pedigrees and mine had grown upon the same sheep-skin. Besides these, there are three or four single men who suit my temper to a hair. The town is one of the neatest in England ; the country is fine, for several miles about it ; and the roads, which are all turnpike, and strike out four or five different ways, are perfectly good all the year round. I mention this latter circumstance chiefly because my distance from Cambridge has made a horseman of me at last, or at least is likely to do so. My brother and I meet every week, by an alternate reciprocation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would express it ; sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise, but generally ride. As to my own personal condition, I am much happier than the day is long, and sunshine and candlelight see me perfectly contented. I get books in abundance, as much company as I choose, a deal of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I think, than for many years past. What is there wanting to make me happy ? Nothing, if I can but be as thankful as I ought ; and I trust that He who has bestowed so many blessings upon me, will

give me gratitude to crown them all. I beg you will give my love to my dear cousin Maria, and to every body at the Park. If Mrs. Maitland is with you, as I suspect by a passage in Lady Hesketh's letter to me, pray remember me to her very affectionately. And believe me, my dear friend, ever yours,

W. C.

XIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

THE UNWINS—MEN ARE PRONE TO OVERVALUE THEIR OWN
CIRCLE.

DEAR JOE,

Oct. 25, 1765.

I AM afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavourable to the *belle assemblée* at Southampton; high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and I are equally fond of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my books, and my fireside; and seldom leave them unless for exercise. I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable; quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son,

who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man; and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They see but little company, which suits me exactly: go when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and I am sure to hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it as we are all better for. You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning; such are the mornings I spend with these good people; and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug and quieter. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think I should find every place disagreeable that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been always apt to do), we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr. Gray's stanza—

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Yours, dear Joe,

W. C.

XIV.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, near Hartford.

PEARSALL'S MEDITATIONS—MRS. UNWIN AND HER SON—
MARTIN MADAN.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I AM much obliged to you for Pearsall's Meditations, especially as it furnishes me with an occasion of writing to you, which is all I have waited for. My friends must excuse me if I write to none but those who lay it fairly in my way to do so. The inference I am apt to draw from their silence is that they wish *me* to be silent too.

I have great reason, my dear cousin, to be thankful to the gracious Providence that conducted me to this place. The lady in whose house I live is so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly Christian, that I could almost fancy my own mother restored to life again to compensate to me for all the friends I have lost, and all my connexions broken. She has a son at Cambridge in all respects worthy of such a mother, the most amiable young man I ever knew. His natural and acquired endowments are very considerable ; and as to his virtues, I need only say that he is a Christian. It ought to be a matter of daily thanksgiving to me, that I am admitted into the society of such persons ; and I pray God to make me, and keep me, worthy of them.

Your brother Martin has been very kind to me, having written to me twice in a style which, though it was once' irksome to me, to say the least, I now know

how to value. I pray God to forgive me the many light things I have both said and thought of him and his labours. Hereafter I shall consider him as a burning and a shining light, and as one of those "who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine hereafter as the stars for ever and ever."

So much for the state of my heart ; as to my spirits, I am cheerful and happy, and having peace with God have peace within myself. For the continuance of this blessing I trust to him who gives it ; and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

Yours affectionately,

W C.

Huntingdon, at the Rev. Mr. Unwin's,
March 12, 1766.

XV.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, Hartford.

LETTERS A FRUIT OF FRIENDSHIP—HIS FORMER AND PRESENT
RELIGIOUS STATE.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, April 4, 1766.

I AGREE with you that letters are not essential to friendship ; but they seem to be a natural fruit of it, when they are the only intercourse that can be had. And a friendship producing no sensible effects is so like indifference, that the appearance may easily deceive even an acute discerner. I retract, however, all that I said in my last upon this subject, having reason to suspect that it proceeded from a principle which I would discourage in myself upon all occasions, even a

pride that felt itself hurt upon a mere suspicion of neglect. I have so much cause for humility, and so much need of it too, and every little sneaking resentment is such an enemy to it, that I hope I shall never give quarter to anything that appears in the shape of sullenness, or self-consequence hereafter. Alas ! if my best Friend, who laid down his life for me, were to remember all the instances in which I have neglected Him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompense ? I will pray therefore for blessings upon my friends even though they cease to be so, and upon my enemies though they continue such. The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceivable. I know well that I passed upon my friends for a person at least religiously inclined, if not actually religious ; and what is more wonderful, I thought myself a Christian, when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him that I should desire him ; in short, when I had neither faith nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, evermore springing up in enmity against him. But blessed be God, even the God who is become my salvation, the hail of affliction and rebuke for sin has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty in great mercy to set all my misdeeds before me. At length, the storm being past, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as ever attends the gift of lively faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus did he break me and bind me up ; thus did he wound me, and his hands made me whole. My dear cousin, I

make no apology for entertaining you with the history of my conversion, because I know you to be a Christian in the sterling import of the appellation. This is, however, but a very summary account of the matter; neither would a letter contain the astonishing particulars of it. If we ever meet again in this world, I will relate them to you by word of mouth; if not, they will serve for the subject of a conference in the next, where I doubt not I shall remember and record them with a gratitude better suited to the subject.

Yours, my dear cousin, affectionately,

W. C.

XVI.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, Hartford.

WHETHER DEPARTED SPIRITS KNOW EACH OTHER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, April 17, 1766.

As in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in the Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all; so in matters concerning which reason can only give a probable guess, and the Scripture has made no explicit discovery, it is, though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossible to argue to any certain conclusion. This seems to me to be the very case with the point in question: reason is able to form many plausible conjectures concerning the possibility of our knowing each other in a future state; and the Scripture has, here and there, favoured us with an expression that looks at least like a slight intimation of it; but because a conjecture can

never amount to a proof, and a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion, therefore I think we can never come to any absolute conclusion upon the subject. We may, indeed, reason about the plausibility of our conjectures, and we may discuss, with great industry and shrewdness of argument, those passages in the Scripture which seem to favour the opinion ; but, still, no certain means having been afforded us, no certain end can be attained ; and after all that can be said, it will still be doubtful whether we shall know each other or not.

As to arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question, than it would be worth my while to write, or yours to read. Let us see, therefore, what the Scripture says, or seems to say, towards the proof of it ; and of this kind of argument, also, I shall insert but a few of those which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose. For, after all, a disputant on either side of this question is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord's, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

As to parables, I know it has been said, in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative ; but this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter which it seems fairly to imply. In this parable, we see that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both, and the discourse between them is

entirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here, therefore, our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and recollection ; and if a soul that has perished shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and recollect each other.

In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the second chapter, and nineteenth verse, St. Paul says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

As to the hope which the apostle has formed concerning them, he himself refers the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning that then he should receive the recompense of his labours in their behalf ; his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of such numbers redeemed by the blessing of God upon his ministration, when he should present them before the great Judge, and say, in the words of a greater than himself, "Lo ! I, and the children whom thou hast given me." This seems to imply that the apostle should know the converts, and the converts the apostle, at least at the day of judgment ; and if then, why not afterwards ?

See also the fourth chapter of that epistle, verses 13, 14, 16, which I have not room to transcribe. Here the apostle comforts them under their affliction for their deceased brethren, exhorting them "not to sorrow as without hope ;" and what is the hope by which he teaches them to support their spirits? Even this, "that them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them

for a season, and that they should receive them at their resurrection.

If you can take off the force of these texts, my dear cousin, you will go a great way towards shaking my opinion; if not, I think they must go a great way towards shaking yours.

The reason why I did not send you my opinion of Pearsall was, because I had not then read him: I have read him since, and like him much, especially the latter part of him; but you have whetted my curiosity to see the last letter by tearing it out: unless you can give me a good reason why I should not see it, I shall inquire for the book the first time I go to Cambridge. Perhaps I may be partial to Hervey for the sake of his other writings; but I cannot give Pearsall the preference to him, for I think him one of the most Scriptural writers in the world.

Yours,

W. C.

XVII.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, Hartford.

WHETHER THEY RECOLLECT THEIR CONDITION ON EARTH.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, April 18, 1766.

HAVING gone as far as I thought needful to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter, I find, upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions you proposed remains entirely unconsidered, viz. "Whether the things of our present state will not be of too low and mean a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part of our communications in heaven."

The common and ordinary occurrences of life, no doubt, and even the ties of kindred, and of all temporal interests, will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society ; and possibly even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not therefore follow that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten ; neither do I think that they can ever appear trifling to us in any the most distant period of eternity. God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be All in all. But does not that expression mean that, being admitted to so near an approach to our heavenly Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring Him ? Doubtless, however, this will be the case ; and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving, to recollect “ the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged ! ” —to recollect the time when our faith, which, under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit, has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of mustard-seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less ?—to recollect the various attempts that were made upon it, by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ? At present, whatever our convictions may be of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us : and it seems reasonable to suppose, that, in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped ;

when we know how weak and frail we were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honour to His strength who fought for us ; when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall know how to value the blood by which we were cleansed as we ought. The twenty-four elders, in the fifth of the Revelations, give glory to God for their redemption out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed ; and if so, then surely the minutest circumstance of their redemption did not escape their memory. They who triumph over the Beast, in the fifteenth chapter, sing the song of Moses, the servant of God ; and what was that song ? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance, and the destruction of her enemies in the Red Sea—typical, no doubt, of the song which the redeemed in Sion shall sing to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This, again, implies a recollection of the dangers they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour they had in every emergency received from the great Deliverer out of all. These quotations do not, indeed, prove that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other ; but they prove that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all ; neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it, or that bears any relation to

the subject. But reason seems to require it so peremptorily, that a society without social intercourse seems to be a solecism, and a contradiction in terms ; and the inhabitants of those regions are called, you know, in Scripture, an innumerable *company*, and an *assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society as clearly as the word itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort, but let it have all the weight it can : I know no greater names in divinity than Watts and Doddridge ; they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter :—

“ Our *companions in glory* may probably assist us by their wise and good observations, when we come to make the *providence of God*, here upon earth, under the guidance and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse*.”

Thus, my dear cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you for an opinion which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state or interest of our soul. May our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into his own Jerusalem ; where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all ; where we shall be free even from innocent error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

XVIII.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, Hartford.

NECESSITY OF THIS BELIEF TO HIS OWN COMFORT.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Sept. 3, 1766.

IT is reckoned, you know, a great achievement to silence an opponent in disputation ; and your silence was of so long a continuance, that I might well begin to please myself with the apprehension of having accomplished so arduous a matter. To be serious, however, I am not sorry that what I have said concerning our knowledge of each other in a future state, has a little inclined you to the affirmative. For though the redeemed of the Lord shall be sure of being as happy in that state as infinite power, employed by infinite goodness, can make them, and therefore it may seem immaterial whether we shall or shall not recollect each other hereafter, yet our present happiness, at least, is a little interested in the question. A parent, a friend, a wife, must needs, I think, feel a little heartache at the thought of an eternal separation from the objects of her regard ; and not to know them, when she meets them in another life, or never to meet them at all, amounts, though not altogether, yet nearly to the same thing. Remember them I think she needs must. To hear that they are happy, will indeed be no small addition to her own felicity ; but to see them so, will surely be a greater. Thus at least it appears to our present human apprehension ; consequently, therefore, to think that when we leave them, we lose them for ever,—that we must

remain eternally ignorant whether they, that were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, partake with us of celestial glory, or are disinherited of their heavenly portion,—must shed a dismal gloom over all our present connexions. For my own part, this life is such a momentary thing, and all its interests have so shrunk in my estimation, since, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I became attentive to the things of another, that, like a worm in the bud of all my friendships and affections, this very thought would eat out the heart of them all, had I a thousand; and were their date to terminate with this life, I think I should have no inclination to cultivate and improve such a fugitive business. Yet friendship is necessary to our happiness here, and, built upon Christian principles, upon which only it can stand, is a thing even of religious sanction; for what is that love which the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. John, so much inculcates, but friendship?—the only love which deserves the name; a love which can toil, and watch, and deny itself, and go to death for its brother. Worldly friendships are a poor weed compared with this; and even this union of spirit in the bond of peace would suffer, in my mind at least, could I think it were only coeval with our earthly mansions. It may possibly argue great weakness in me, in this instance, to stand so much in need of future hopes to support me in the discharge of present duty. But so it is: I am far, I know, very far from being perfect in Christian love, or any other divine attainment, and am, therefore, unwilling to forego whatever may help me in my progress.

You are so kind as to inquire after my health, for which reason I must tell you, what otherwise would

not be worth mentioning, that I have lately been just enough indisposed to convince me that not only human life in general, but mine in particular, hangs by a slender thread. I am stout enough in appearance, yet a little illness demolishes me. I have had a severe shake, and the building is not so firm as it was. But I bless God for it with all my heart. If the inner man be but strengthened day by day, as I hope, under the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost it will be, no matter how soon the outward is dissolved. He who has in a manner raised me from the dead, in a literal sense, has given me the grace, I trust, to be ready at the shortest notice to surrender up to Him that life which I have twice received from him. Whether I live or die, I desire it may be to his glory, and it must be to my happiness. I thank God that I have those amongst my kindred to whom I can write without reserve my sentiments upon this subject, as I do to you. A letter upon any other subject is more insipid to me than ever my task was when a schoolboy ; and I say not this in vain glory, God forbid ! but to show you what the Almighty, whose name I am unworthy to mention, has done for me, the chief of sinners. Once he was a terror to me ; and his service, oh, what a weariness it was ! Now I can say I love him, and his holy name, and I am never so happy as when I speak of his mercies to me.

Yours, dear cousin,

W. C.

XIX.

To Mrs. Cowper, at the Park House, Hartford.

MANNER OF LIFE WITH THE UNWINS—REASONS FOR NOT
TAKING ORDERS.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.

I AM very sorry for poor Charles's illness, and hope you will soon have cause to thank God for his complete recovery. We have an epidemical fever in this country likewise, which leaves behind it a continual sighing, almost to suffocation ; not that I have seen any instance of it, for, blessed be God ! our family have hitherto escaped it ; but such was the account I heard of it this morning.

I am obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your inquiring so particularly after the manner in which my time passes here. As to amusements—I mean what the world calls such—we have none ; the place, indeed, swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine ; till eleven, we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries ; at eleven, we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day ; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval, I either

read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner ; but, if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea, we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night, we read and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon ; and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you*, that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness ; accordingly, we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her ; and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life ; above all, for a heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose ; but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it ; indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibi-

tions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the meantime, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth in a private way ; and I hope that my endeavours in this way have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman.

Yours ever, my dear cousin,

W. C.

XX.

To MRS. COWPER.

REJOICING TO FIND HER IN ACCORD WITH HIM—MARSHALL
(ON SANCTIFICATION) A FAVOURITE AUTHOR.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, March 11, 1767.

To find those whom I love, clearly and strongly persuaded of evangelical truth, gives me a pleasure superior to any that this world can afford me. Judge, then, whether your letter, in which the body and substance of a saving faith is so evidently set forth, could meet with a lukewarm reception at my hands, or be entertained with indifference. Would you know the true reason of my long silence ? Conscious that my religious principles are generally excepted against, and that the conduct they produce, wherever they are heartily maintained, is still more the object of disapprobation than those principles themselves ; and remembering that I had made both the one and the other known to you, without having any clear assurance that our faith in Jesus was of the same stamp and character, I could not

help thinking it possible that you might disapprove both my sentiments and practice ; that you might think the one unsupported by Scripture, and the other whimsical and unnecessarily strict and rigorous, and consequently would be rather pleased with the suspension of a correspondence, which a different way of thinking upon so momentous a subject as that we wrote upon, was likely to render tedious and irksome to you.

I have told you the truth from my heart : forgive me these injurious suspicions, and never imagine that I shall hear from you upon this delightful theme without a real joy, or without prayer to God to prosper you in the way of his truth—his sanctifying and saving truth. The book you mention lies now upon my table. Marshall is an old acquaintance of mine ; I have both read him and heard him read, with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness : that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his Spirit ; that corrupt and wretched in ourselves, in him, and in *him only*, we are complete ; that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid and eternal interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father ; and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in grace, and its consummation in glory, is given, freely *given* to us of God ; in short, that he hath opened the kingdom of heaven to *all believers*. These are the truths which, by the grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself—shall ever be placed next my heart, as the throne whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its

motions, and reduce that world of iniquity and rebellion to a state of filial and affectionate obedience to the will of the most Holy.

These, my dear cousin, are the truths to which by nature we are enemies. They debase the sinner, and exalt the Saviour to a degree which the pride of our hearts (till Almighty grace subdues them) is determined never to allow. May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts continually more and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ!

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

XXI.

To MRS. COWPER.

INTRODUCING MR. UNWIN, JUN.—GARDENING—REMARKS ON
MARSHALL.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, March 14, 1767.

I JUST add a line by way of postscript to my last, to apprise you of the arrival of a very dear friend of mine at the Park, on Friday next, the son of Mr. Unwin, whom I have desired to call on you, in his way from London to Huntingdon. If you knew him as well as I do, you would love him as much. But I leave the young man to speak for himself, which he is very able to do. He is ready possessed of an answer to every question you can possibly ask concerning me, and knows my *whole story* from first to last. I give you this previous notice, because I know you are not fond of strange

faces, and because I thought it would in some degree save him the pain of announcing himself.

I am become a great florist and shrub-doctor. If the Major can make up a small packet of seeds, that will make a figure in a garden, where we have little else besides jessamine and honeysuckle—such a packet, I mean, as may be put in one's fob—I will promise to take great care of them, as I ought to value natives of the Park. They must not be such, however, as require great skill in the management, for at present I have no skill to spare.

I think Marshall one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings, upon those parts of our most holy religion which are generally least understood (even by real Christians), as masterpieces of the kind. His section upon the union of the soul with Christ is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth with admirable perspicuity, and with great good sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith.

I subjoin thus much upon that author, because, though you desired my opinion of him, I remember that in my last I rather left you to find it out by inference, than expressed it as I ought to have done. I never met with a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it.

W. C.

XXII.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, Hartford.

CONDEMNS HIMSELF FOR HIS MOTIVE IN INTRODUCING HIS
YOUNG FRIEND.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, April 3, 1767.

You sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with your kind reception of him, and with everything he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect, at first, that pride and vain-glory had any share in it; but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered in that fruitful soil the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has since that time received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it by introducing him to one of my most splendid connexions; that when he hears me called "*That fellow Cowper*," which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh, pride!

pride ! it deceives me with the subtlety of a serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about, to get from under the cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good-will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger, and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper, will be more ready, perhaps, to excuse me, in this instance, than I can be to excuse myself. But in good truth, it was abominable pride of heart, indignation, and vanity, and deserves no better name. How should such a creature be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions, where nothing shall enter that defileth, did not the blood of Christ, applied by the hand of faith, take away the guilt of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it ? Oh, what continual need have I of an Almighty, All-sufficient Saviour ! I am glad you are acquainted so *particularly* with *all* the circumstances of my story, for I know that your secrecy and discretion may be trusted with anything. A thread of mercy ran through all the intricate maze of those afflictive providences, so mysterious to myself at the time, and which must ever remain so to all, who will not see what was the great design of them : at the judgment-seat of Christ the whole shall be laid open. How is the rod of iron changed into a sceptre of love !

I thank you for the seeds : I have committed some of each sort to the ground, whence they will soon spring up like so many mementos to remind me of my friends at the Park.

W. C.

XXIII.

To MRS. COWPER, at the Park House, Hartford.

MR. UNWIN'S DEATH—UNCERTAINTY WHERE TO SETTLE.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, July 13, 1767.

THE newspaper has told you the truth. Poor Mr. Unwin being flung from his horse, as he was going to the church on Sunday morning, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of the skull, under which he languished till Thursday evening, and then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression upon our spirits, which will not presently be worn off. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately after his fall, about a mile from home; and his body could not be brought to his house till the spirit was gone to Him who gave it. May it be a lesson to us to watch, since we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord cometh!

The effect of it upon my circumstances will only be a change of the place of my abode. For I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we trust that the Lord, whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friend Haweis, Dr. Conyers of Helmsley in Yorkshire, and Mr. Newton of Olney, to look out a place for us; but at present are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether under either. I have written to my Aunt Madan, to desire Martin to assist us with his inquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

W. C.

XXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

THE SAME SUBJECT.

DEAR JOE,

Huntingdon, July 16, 1767.

YOUR wishes that the newspapers may have misinformed you are vain. Mr. Unwin is dead, and died in the manner there mentioned. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us ; and before ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed, in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening. I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony, for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense that were indulged him he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour. To that strong hold we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death ; when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter to which we can repair to any purpose ; and happy is it for us when, the false ground we have chosen for ourselves being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the Rock which can never be shaken. When this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy.

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place ; where, is at present uncertain.

Yours,

W. C.

XXV.

*To Mrs. Cowper.*¹

HIS RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS—AN IMPORTANT N.B.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I HAVE not been behindhand in reproaching myself with neglect, but desire to take shame to myself for my unprofitableness in this, as well as in all other respects. I take the next immediate opportunity, however, of thanking you for yours, and of assuring you that, instead of being surprised at your silence, I rather wonder that you, or any of my friends, have any room left for so careless and negligent a correspondent in your memories. I am obliged to you for the intelligence you send me of my kindred, and rejoice to hear of their welfare. He who settles the bounds of our habitations has at length cast our lot at a great distance from each other ; but I do not therefore forget their former kindness to me, or cease to be interested in their well-being. You live in the centre of a world I know you do not delight in. Happy are you, my dear friend, in being able to discern the insufficiency of all it can afford to fill and satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. That God who created us for the enjoyment of himself, has determined in mercy that it shall fail us here, in order that the blessed result of all our inquiries after happi-

¹ Date unknown, probably at the end of the year 1767, on his settling at Olney. The emphatic postscript was doubtless added to counteract any idle rumour that might arise from his having settled himself under the roof of a female friend, whose age and whose virtues he considered as sufficient securities to ensure her good reputation and his own.

ness in the creature, may be a warm pursuit and a close attachment to our true interests, in fellowship and communion with him, through the name and mediation of a dear Redeemer. I bless his goodness and grace, that I have any reason to hope I am a partaker with you in the desire after better things than are to be found in a world polluted with sin, and therefore devoted to destruction. May he enable us both to consider our present life in its only true light, as an opportunity put into our hands to glorify him amongst men, by a conduct suited to his word and will. I am miserably defective in this holy and blessed art; but I hope there is at the bottom of all my sinful infirmities, a sincere desire to live just so long as I may be enabled, in some poor measure, to answer the end of my existence in this respect, and then to obey the summons, and attend him in a world where they, who are his servants here, shall pay him an un sinful obedience for ever. Your dear mother is too good to me, and puts a more charitable construction upon my silence than the fact will warrant. I am not better employed than I should be in corresponding with her. I have that within which hinders me wretchedly in everything that I ought to do, but is prone to trifle, and let time and every good thing run to waste. I hope, however, to write to her soon.

My love and best wishes attend Mr. Cowper, and all that inquire after me. May God be with you, to bless you, and do you good, by all his dispensations; don't forget me when you are speaking to our best Friend before his mercy-seat.

Yours ever,

W. C.

N. B. *I am not married.*



OLNEY CHURCH.

XXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

HAS BEEN ON A VISIT TO ST. ALBAN'S—WILKES AND LIBERTY.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, June 16, 1768.

I THANK you for so full an answer to so empty an epistle. If Olney furnished anything for your amuse-

ment, you should have it in return ; but occurrences here are as scarce as cucumbers at Christmas.

I visited St. Alban's about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there, and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half-spent life so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or write much about them. Whether the nation is worshipping Mr. Wilkes, or any other idol, is of little moment to one who hopes and believes that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God. I thank him, that he has given me such a deep impressed persuasion of this awful truth, as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives me a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

XXVII.

To MRS. COWPER.

A LETTER OF CONSOLATION ON DOMESTIC AFFLICTION.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, August 31, 1769.

A LETTER from your brother Frederick brought me yesterday the most afflicting intelligence that has reached me these many years. I pray to God to comfort you, and to enable you to sustain this heavy stroke with that resignation to his will, which none but himself can give, and which he gives to none but his own

children. How blessed and happy is your lot, my dear friend, beyond the common lot of the greater part of mankind ; that you know what it is to draw near to God in prayer, and are acquainted with a throne of grace ! You have resources in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer, which are withheld from millions : and the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bitterest cup which your heavenly Father will ever put into your hand. May he now give you liberty to drink at these wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace in the midst of trouble ! He has said, When thou passest through the fire I will be with thee, and when through the floods, they shall not overflow thee. You have need of such a word as this, and he knows your need of it ; and the time of necessity is the time when he will be sure to appear in behalf of those who trust in him. I bear you and yours upon my heart before him night and day, for I never expect to hear of distress which shall call upon me with a louder voice to pray for the sufferer. I know the Lord hears me for myself, vile and sinful as I am, and believe, and am sure that he will hear me for you also. He is the Friend of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless, even God in his holy habitation ; in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and chastens us in his mercy. Surely he will sanctify this dispensation to you, do you great and everlasting good by it, make the world appear like dust and vanity in your sight, as it truly is, and open to your view the glories of a better country, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor pain, but God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes for ever. Oh that comfortable word ! “ I have chosen thee

in the furnace of affliction :” so that our very sorrows are evidences of our calling, and he chastens us, because we are his children.

My dear cousin, I commit you to the word of his grace, and to the comforts of his Holy Spirit. Your life is needful for your family ; may God, in mercy to them, prolong it ; and may he preserve you from the dangerous effects which a stroke like this might have upon a frame so tender as yours. I grieve with you, I pray for you ; could I do more I would, but God must comfort you.

Yours, in our dear Lord Jesus,

W. C.

XXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

SOME PEOPLE TRAVEL, BUT COWPER PREFERS RETIREMENT.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, 1769.

SIR THOMAS crosses the Alps, and Sir Cowper, for that is his title at Olney, prefers his home to any other spot of earth in the world. Horace, observing this difference of temper in different persons, cried out a good many years ago, in the true spirit of poetry, “How much one man differs from another !” This does not seem a very sublime exclamation in English, but I remember we were taught to admire it in the original.

My dear friend, I am obliged to you for your invitation, but being long accustomed to retirement, which I was always fond of, I am now more than ever unwilling to revisit those noisy and crowded scenes, which I

never loved, and which I now abhor. I remember you with all the friendship I ever professed, which is as much as I ever entertained for any man. But the strange and uncommon incidents of my life have given an entire new turn to my whole character and conduct, and rendered me incapable of receiving pleasure from the same employments and amusements of which I could readily partake in former days.

I love you and yours ; I thank you for your continued remembrance of me, and shall not cease to be their and your

Affectionate friend and servant,

W. C.

XXIX.

To Mrs. Cowper.

ALARMING ILLNESS OF HIS BROTHER.

Cambridge, March 5, 1770.

My brother continues much as he was. His case is a very dangerous one. An imposthume of the liver, attended by an asthma and dropsy. The physician has little hope of his recovery, I believe I might say none at all ; only being a friend he does not formally give him over by ceasing to visit him, lest it should sink his spirits. For my own part, I have no expectation of his recovery, except by a signal interposition of Providence in answer to prayer. His case is clearly out of the reach of medicine ; but I have seen many a sickness healed, where the danger has been equally threatening, by the only Physician of value. I doubt

not he will have an interest in your prayers, as he has in the prayers of many. May the Lord incline his ear, and give an answer of peace! I know it is good to be afflicted. I trust that you have found it so, and that under the teaching of God's own Spirit, we shall both be purified. It is the desire of my soul to seek a better country, where God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people; and where, looking back upon the ways by which he has led us, we shall be filled with everlasting wonder, love, and praise. I must add no more.

Yours ever,

W. C.

XXX.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, March 31, 1770.

I AM glad that the Lord made you a fellow-labourer with us, in praying my dear brother out of darkness into light. It was a blessed work, and when it shall be your turn to die in the Lord, and to rest from all your labours, that work shall follow you. I once entertained hopes of his recovery: from the moment when it pleased God to give him light in his soul, there was for four days such a visible amendment in his body as surprised us all. Dr. Glynn himself was puzzled, and began to think that all his threatening conjectures would fail of their accomplishment. I am well satisfied, that it was thus ordered, not for his own sake, but for the sake of us who had been so deeply concerned for his spiritual welfare, that he might be

able to give such evident proof of the work of God upon his soul as should leave no doubt behind it. As to his friends at Cambridge they knew nothing of the matter. He never spoke of these things but to myself, nor to me when others were within hearing, except that he sometimes would speak in the presence of the nurse. He knew well to make the distinction between those who could understand him and those who could not ; and that he was not in circumstances to maintain such a controversy as a declaration of his new views and sentiments would have exposed him to. Just after his death I spoke of this change to a dear friend of his, a fellow of the college, who had attended him through all his sickness with assiduity and tenderness ; but he did not understand me.

I now proceed to mention such particulars as I can recollect, and which I had not an opportunity to insert in my letters to Olney ; for I left Cambridge suddenly, and sooner than I expected. He was deeply impressed with a sense of the difficulties he should have to encounter, if it should please God to raise him again. He saw the necessity of being faithful, and the opposition he should expose himself to by being so. Under the weight of these thoughts he one day broke out in the following prayer, when only myself was with him. " O Lord, thou art light ; and in thee is no darkness at all. Thou art the fountain of all wisdom, and it is essential to thee to be good and gracious. I am a child, O Lord, teach me how I should conduct myself. Give me the wisdom of the serpent, with the harmlessness of the dove. Bless the souls thou hast committed to the care of thy helpless miserable creature, who has no wisdom or knowledge of his own, and

make me faithful to them for thy mercy's sake." Another time he said, "How wonderful it is that God should look upon man; and how much more wonderful that he should look upon such a worm as I am! Yet he does look upon me, and takes the exactest notice of all my sufferings. He is present, and I see him (I mean by faith); and he stretches out his arms towards me"—and he then stretched out his own—"and he says, Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." He smiled and wept, when he spoke these words. When he expressed himself upon these subjects, there was a weight and a dignity in his manner such as I never saw before. He spoke with the greatest deliberation, making a pause at the end of every sentence; and there was something in his air and in the tone of his voice inexpressibly solemn, unlike himself, unlike what I had ever seen in another.

This hath God wrought. I have praised him for his marvellous act, and have felt a joy of heart upon the subject of my brother's death, such as I never felt but in my own conversion. He is now before the throne; and yet a little while, and we shall meet never more to be divided.

Yours, my very dear friend, with my affectionate respects to yourself and yours,

W. C.

Postscript.—A day or two before his death he grew so weak and was so very ill, that he required continual attendance, so that he had neither strength nor opportunity to say much to me. Only the day before, he said he had had a sleepless, but a composed and quiet

night. I asked him if he had been able to collect his thoughts. He replied, "All night long I have endeavoured to think upon God and to continue in prayer. I had great peace and comfort; and what comfort I had came in that way." When I saw him the next morning at seven o'clock, he was dying, fast asleep, and exempted, in all appearance, from the sense of those pangs which accompany dissolution. I shall be glad to hear from you, my dear friend, when you can find time to write and are so inclined. The death of my beloved brother teems with many useful lessons. May God seal the instruction upon our hearts.

XXXI.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

HIS OWN PECUNIARY CONCERNS—HIS BROTHER'S DEATH, AND
STATE OF MIND PREVIOUSLY.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, May 8, 1770.

YOUR letter did not reach me till the last post, when I had not time to answer it. I left Cambridge immediately after my brother's death.

I am obliged to you for the particular account you have sent me. * * * *

He to whom I have surrendered myself and all my concerns hath otherwise appointed, and let his will be done. He gives me much which he withholds from others; and if he was pleased to withhold all that makes an outward difference between me and the poor mendicant in the street, it would still become me to say, his will be done.

It pleased God to cut short my brother's connexions and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happiness than any he could propose to himself in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning (for he was one of the chief men in the university in that respect), he was candid and sincere in his inquiries after truth. Though he could not come into my sentiments when I first acquainted him with them, nor, in the many conversations which I afterwards had with him upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as Scriptural and true, yet I had no sooner left St. Alban's than he began to study with the deepest attention those points on which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time he laboured in this pursuit with unwearied diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these, "Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to believe as you did. I found myself not able to believe, yet always thought I should be one day brought to do so." From the study of books, he was brought upon his death-bed to the study of himself, and there learned to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith. With these views he was desirous of death. Satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

XXXII.

To MRS. COWPER.

MORE ABOUT HIS BROTHER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, June 7, 1770.

I AM obliged to you for sometimes thinking of an unseen friend, and bestowing a letter upon me. It gives me pleasure to hear from you, especially to find that our gracious Lord enables you to weather out the storms you meet with, and to cast anchor within the veil.

You judge rightly of the manner in which I have been affected by the Lord's late dispensation towards my brother. I found in it cause of sorrow, that I had lost so near a relation, and one so deservedly dear to me, and that he left me just when our sentiments upon the most interesting subject became the same ; but much more cause of joy, that it pleased God to give me clear and evident proof that he had changed his heart, and adopted him into the number of his children. For this I hold myself peculiarly bound to thank Him, because he might have done all that he was pleased to do for him, and yet have afforded him neither strength nor opportunity to declare it. I doubt not that he enlightens the understandings, and works a gracious change in the hearts of many in their last moments, whose surrounding friends are not made acquainted with it.

He told me, that from the time he was first ordained, he began to be dissatisfied with his religious opinions, and to suspect that there were greater things concealed

in the Bible, than were generally believed or allowed to be there. From the time when I first visited him after my release from St. Alban's, he began to read upon the subject. It was at that time I informed him of the views of divine truth, which I had received in that school of affliction. He laid what I said to heart, and began to furnish himself with the best writers upon the controverted points, whose works he read with great diligence and attention, comparing them all the while with the Scripture. None ever truly and ingenuously sought the truth but they found it. A spirit of earnest inquiry is the gift of God, who never says to any, Seek ye my face in vain. Accordingly, about ten days before his death, it pleased the Lord to dispel all his doubts, and to reveal in his heart the knowledge of the Saviour, and to give him firm and unshaken peace, in the belief of His ability and willingness to save.

Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to you for your kind inquiry after her. She is well, I thank God, as usual, and sends her respects to you. Her son is in the ministry, and has the living of Stock, in Essex. We were last week alarmed with an account of his being dangerously ill; Mrs. Unwin went to see him, and in a few days left him out of danger.

W. C.

XXXIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

AFFECTIONATE NOTICE OF HILL, AND THANKS FOR HIS REPEATED INVITATION.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, September 25, 1770.

I HAVE not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able to hold more

continual converse with a Friend above the skies. He has my heart, but he allows a corner in it for all who show me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of sixty-three made a wreck of the friendships I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney, unless in a case of absolute necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.

W. C.

XXXIV.

*To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.*¹

DOES NOT THINK IT ADVISABLE TO MAKE ANY APPLICATION
TO HIS OLD FRIEND THURLOW, NOW LORD CHANCELLOR.

DEAR UNWIN,

Olney, June 18, 1778.

I FEEL myself much obliged to you for your kind intimation, and have given the subject of it all my best

¹ By comparing the date of this letter with that of the preceding one, it will be seen that there is an interval of eight years between them. During this period, Cowper had been attacked in January, 1773, with a severe visitation of his constitutional melancholy, from which he slowly recovered; but there remained one terrible hallucination which never left him all the rest of his life, namely, that God had shut him out from mercy for ever. Thenceforward, we find in his letters very little comfortable reference to his own personal religion; but we find the same benevolent zeal for the salvation and happiness of his fellow-creatures, the same patriotic feelings of an English gentleman, the same just and delicate observations on men and manners, taste and literature, as he used to express in his happier days.

attention, both before I received your letter and since. The result is, that I am persuaded it will be better not to write. I know the man and his disposition well; he is very liberal in his way of thinking, generous and discerning. He is well aware of the tricks that are played upon such occasions; and, after fifteen years' interruption of all intercourse between us, would translate my letter into this language—pray remember the poor. This would disgust him, because he would think our former intimacy disgraced by such an oblique application. He has not forgotten me; and if he had, there are those about him who cannot come into his presence without reminding him of me, and he is also perfectly acquainted with my circumstances. It would perhaps give him pleasure to surprise me with a benefit; and, if he means me such a favour, I should disappoint him by asking it.

I repeat my thanks for your suggestion; you see a part of my reasons for thus conducting myself: if we were together, I could give you more.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

XXXV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON THE NEW EDITION OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FOR WHICH
JOHNSON WROTE THE LIVES.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 26, 1779.

I AM obliged to you for the Poets; and though I little thought that I was translating so much money

out of your pocket into the bookseller's, when I turned Prior's poem into Latin, yet I must needs say that, if you think it worth while to purchase the English Classics at all, you cannot possess yourself of them upon better terms. I have looked into some of the volumes, but not having yet finished the Register have merely looked into them. A few things I have met with, which if they had been burned the moment they were written, it would have been better for the author, and at least as well for his readers. There is not much of this, but a little is too much. I think it a pity the editor admitted any ; the English Muse would have lost no credit by the omission of such trash. Some of them again seem to me to have but a very disputable right to a place among the Classics ; and I am quite at a loss, when I see them in such company, to conjecture what is Dr. Johnson's idea or definition of classical merit. But if he inserts the poems of some who can hardly be said to deserve such an honour, the purchaser may comfort himself with the hope that he will exclude none that do.

W. C.

XXXVI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

IS GOING TO TURN GLAZIER—HIS AMUSEMENTS—A VISIT TO
GAYHURST, A NEIGHBOURING GENTLEMAN'S SEAT.

Olney, September 21, 1779.

Amico mio, be pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond pencil. I have glazed the two frames designed to receive my pine plants. But I cannot mend the

kitchen windows till, by the help of that implement, I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber I should be a complete glazier, and possibly the happy time may come when I shall be seen trudging away to the neighbouring towns with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If Government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I hardly know a business in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself. A Chinese of ten times my fortune, would avail himself of such an opportunity without scruple; and why should not I, who want money as much as any mandarin in China? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture, "that he had found the Emilius, who (he supposed) had subsisted only in his own idea." I would recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task, and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church windows; which, as it would save money to the parish, would conduce, together with your other ministerial accomplishments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in the morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast, for I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good, if that should be the case, to announce yourself by some means or other. For I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your mother and I, last week, made a trip in a post-chaise to Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, about four miles off. He understood that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me that he was going into Leicestershire, and that, if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself, without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hothouse in the most flourishing state, and the orange trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice.

Our love attends you all.

Yours,

W. C.

XXXVII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

HIS OPINIONS OF JOHNSON'S BIOGRAPHIES—THINKS HIM UNJUST
TO MILTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, October 31, 1779.

I WROTE my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say ; in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct, though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biography, for which I thank you : with one exception, and

that a swingeing one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. He has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of everything royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvass. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him; and it is well for Milton that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough, that, if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is, indeed, ridiculous enough), the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the "Paradise Lost?" It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end, and never equalled, unless, perhaps, by Virgil. Yet

the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room ; our love attends you.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

XXXVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MEN OF GENIUS ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THEIR OWN PERFORMANCES—WRITING ON TEMPORARY TOPICS NOT SATISFACTORY—DRUNKENNESS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, February 27, 1780.

As you are pleased to desire my letters I am the more pleased with writing them, though at the same time I must needs testify my surprise that you should think them worth receiving, as I seldom send one that I think favourably of myself. This is not to be understood as an imputation upon your taste or judgment, but as an encomium upon my own modesty and humility, which I desire you to remark well. It is a just observation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that though men of ordinary talents may be highly satisfied with their own productions, men of true genius never are. Whatever be their subject, they always seem to themselves to fall short of it, even when they seem to others

most to excel. And for this reason—because they have a certain sublime sense of perfection, which other men are strangers to, and which they themselves, in their performances, are not able to exemplify. Your servant, Sir Joshua! I little thought of seeing you when I began, but as you have popped in you are welcome.

When I wrote last, I was a little inclined to send you a copy of verses entitled the Modern Patriot, but was not quite pleased with a line or two which I found it difficult to mend, therefore did not. At night, I read Mr. Burke's speech in the newspaper, and was so well pleased with his proposals for a reformation, and the temper in which he made them, that I began to think better of his cause, and burnt my verses. Such is the lot of the man who writes upon the subject of the day; the aspect of affairs changes in an hour or two and his opinion with it; what was a just, well-deserved satire in the morning, in the evening becomes a libel: the author commences his own judge, and while he condemns with unrelenting severity what he so lately approved, is sorry to find that he has laid his leaf-gold upon touch-wood, which crumbled away under his fingers. Alas! What can I do with my wit? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive, that while a man catches at the subject, he is only filling his hand with smoke. I must do with it as I do with my linnet; I keep him for the most part in a cage, but now and then set open the door, that he may whisk about the room a little, and then shut him up again. My whisking wit has produced the following, the subject of which is more important than the manner in which I have treated it

seems to imply ; but a fable may speak truth, and all truth is sterling ; I only premise, that, in the philosophical tract in the Register, I found it asserted that the glow-worm is the nightingale's food.¹

An officer of a regiment, part of which is quartered here, gave one of the soldiers leave to be drunk six weeks; in hopes of curing him by satiety—he *was* drunk six weeks, and is so still, as often as he can find an opportunity. One vice may swallow up another, but no coroner in the state of Ethics ever brought in his verdict, when a vice died, that it was—*felo de se*.

Thanks for all you have done, and all you intend : the biography will be particularly welcome.

Yours,

W. C.

XXXIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON KEEPING THE SABBATH.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, March 28, 1780.

WITH respect to the advice you are required to give to a young lady, that she may be properly instructed in the manner of keeping the sabbath, I just subjoin a few hints that have occurred to me upon the occasion ; not because I think you want them, but because it would seem unkind to withhold them. The sabbath then, I

¹ This letter contained the beautiful fable of the Nightingale and the Glow-worm.

think, may be considered, first, as a commandment, no less binding upon modern Christians than upon ancient Jews ; because the spiritual people amongst them did not think it enough to abstain from manual occupations upon that day ; but, entering more deeply into the meaning of the precept, allotted those hours they took from the world to the cultivation of holiness in their own souls, which ever was, and ever will be, a duty incumbent upon all who ever heard of a sabbath, and is of perpetual obligation both upon Jews and Christians ; (the commandment, therefore, enjoins it ; the prophets have also enforced it ; and in many instances, both Scriptural and modern, the breach of it has been punished with a providential and judicial severity that may make bystanders tremble) : secondly, as a privilege, which you well know how to dilate upon, better than I can tell you : thirdly, as a sign of that covenant by which believers are entitled to a rest that yet remaineth : fourthly, as the *sine quâ non* of the Christian character ; and upon this head I should guard against being misunderstood to mean no more than two attendances upon public worship, which is a form complied with by thousands who never kept a sabbath in their lives. Consistency is necessary, to give substance and solidity to the whole. To sanctify the day at church, and to trifle it away out of church, is profanation, and vitiates all. After all, I would ask my catechumen one short question—"Do you love the day, or do you not ? If you love it, you will never inquire how far you may safely deprive yourself of the enjoyment of it. If you do not love it, and you find yourself obliged in conscience to acknowledge it, that is an alarming symptom, and ought to make you tremble. If you do not love it,

then it is a weariness to you, and you wish it was over. The ideas of labour and rest are not more opposite to each other than the idea of a sabbath, and that dislike and disgust with which it fills the souls of thousands to be obliged to keep it. It is worse than bodily labour."

W. C.

XL.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON PLURALITIES—HIS OWN AMUSEMENTS—IS A PROFICIENT
IN DRAWING.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, April 6, 1780.

I NEVER was, any more than yourself, a friend to pluralities ; they are generally found in the hands of the avaricious, whose insatiable hunger after preferment proves them unworthy of any at all. They attend much to the regular payment of their dues, but not at all to the spiritual interests of their parishioners. Having forgot their duty, or never known it, they differ in nothing from the laity, except their outward garb, and their exclusive right to the desk and pulpit. But when pluralities seek the man, instead of being sought by him ; and when the man is honest, conscientious, and pious ; careful to employ a substitute in those respects like himself ; and, not contented with this, will see with his own eyes that the concerns of his parishes are decently and diligently administered ; in that case, considering the present dearth of such

characters in the ministry, I think it an event advantageous to the people, and much to be desired by all who regret the great and apparent want of sobriety and earnestness among the clergy. A man who does not seek a living merely as a pecuniary emolument, has no need, in my judgment, to refuse one because it is so. He means to do his duty, and by doing it he earns his wages. The two rectories being contiguous to each other, and falling easily under the care of one pastor, and both so near to Stock that you can visit them without difficulty, as often as you please, I see no reasonable objection, nor does your mother. As to the wry-mouthed sneers and illiberal misconstructions of the censorious, I know no better shield to guard you against them than what you are already furnished with—a clear and unoffended conscience.

I am obliged to you for what you said upon the subject of book-buying, and am very fond of availing myself of another man's pocket, when I can do it creditably to myself and without injury to him. Amusements are necessary, in a retirement like mine, especially in such a sable state of mind as I labour under. The necessity of amusement makes me sometimes write verses ; it made me a carpenter, a birdcage maker, a gardener ; and has lately taught me to draw, and to draw too with such surprising proficiency in the art, considering my total ignorance of it two months ago, that when I show your mother my productions, she is all admiration and applause.

You need never fear the communication of what you entrust to us in confidence. You know your mother's delicacy on this point sufficiently ; and as for me, I once wrote a *Connoisseur* upon the subject of secret-

keeping, and from that day to this I believe I have never divulged one.

We were much pleased with Mr. Newton's application to you for a charity sermon, and with what he said upon that subject in his last letter, "that he was glad of an opportunity to give you that proof of his regard."

Believe me yours,

W. C

XLI.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

AN UNMANNERLY AND DISAGREEABLE VISITOR.

Olney, April 16, 1780.

SINCE I wrote my last we have had a visit from ——. I did not feel myself vehemently disposed to receive him with that complaisance, from which a stranger generally infers that he is welcome. By his manner, which was rather bold than easy, I judged that there was no occasion for it, and that it was a trifle which, if he did not meet with, neither would he feel the want of. He has the air of a travelled man, but not of a travelled gentleman; is quite delivered from that reserve which is so common an ingredient in the English character, yet does not open himself gently and gradually, as men of polite behaviour do, but bursts upon you all at once. He talks very loud, and when our poor little robins hear a great noise, they are immediately seized with an ambition to surpass it; the increase of their vociferation occasioned an increase of

his, and his in return acted as a stimulus upon theirs ; neither side entertained a thought of giving up the contest, which became continually more interesting to our ears, during the whole visit. The birds, however, survived it, and so did we. They perhaps flatter themselves they gained a complete victory, but I believe Mr. — would have killed them both in another hour.

W. C.

XLII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

VARIETY OF HIS TOPICS—RURAL SCENERY—AMUSEMENT IN TRIFLES.

DEAR SIR,

Olney, May 3, 1780.

You indulge me in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion in this scribbling employment, that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you for swallowing such boluses as I send you, for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe I am the only man alive from whom they would be welcome to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid than they are, more alluring to the eye, at least, if not more pleasing to the taste ; but my leaf gold is tarnished, and has received such a tinge from the vapours that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me, that you will read my letters. I am not fond of long-winded metaphors ; I have always observed that they halt at the latter end of their progress, and so do mine. I deal much in ink indeed,

but not such ink as is employed by poets and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid, and guilty of no deceptions but such as may prevail without the least injury to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks, and dab-chicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin admires them ; and her praise, and my praise put together, are fame enough for me. Oh ! I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely prospect. My eyes drink the rivers as they flow. If every human being upon earth could think for one quarter of an hour as I have done for many years, there might perhaps be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one would be found from the arctic to the antarctic circle. At present, the difference between them and me is greatly to their advantage. I delight in baubles, and know them to be so ; for rested in, and viewed without a reference to their Author, what is the earth, what are the planets, what is the sun itself but a bauble ? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, "The Maker of all these wonders is my friend !" Their eyes have never been opened to see that they are trifles ; mine have been, and will be till they are closed for ever. They think a fine estate, a large conservatory, a hothouse rich as a West Indian garden, things of consequence ; visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more. I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains will ever be worth a farthing ; amuse myself with a greenhouse which Lord Bute's gardener could take upon his back and walk away with ; and

when I have paid it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself—"This is not mine, it is a plaything lent me for the present; I must leave it soon."

W. C.

XLIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

IS CHANGEABLE IN HIS EMPLOYMENTS—COMPARISON OF 1780
WITH THE TIMES OF CHARLES I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 8, 1780.

MY scribbling humour has of late been entirely absorbed in the passion for landscape drawing. It is a most amusing art, and, like every other art, requires much practice and attention.

Nil sine multo
Vita labore dedit mortalibus.

Excellence is providentially placed beyond the reach of indolence, that success may be the reward of industry, and that idleness may be punished with obscurity and disgrace. So long as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind. I never received a *little* pleasure from anything in my life; if I am delighted, it is in the extreme. The unhappy consequence of this temperament is, that my attachment to any occupation seldom outlives the novelty of it. That nerve of my imagination that feels the touch of any particular amusement, twangs under the energy of the pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes

sensible of weariness and fatigue. Hence I draw an unfavourable prognostic, and expect that I shall shortly be constrained to look out for something else. Then, perhaps, I may string the harp again, and be able to comply with your demand.

From a general recollection of Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, I thought (and I remember I told you so), that there was a striking resemblance between that period and the present. But I am now reading, and have read three volumes of Hume's History, one of which is engrossed entirely by that subject. There I see reason to alter my opinion, and the seeming resemblance has disappeared upon a more particular information. Charles succeeded to a long train of arbitrary princes, whose subjects had tamely acquiesced in the despotism of their masters till their privileges were all forgot. He did but tread in their steps, and exemplify the principles in which he had been brought up, when he oppressed his people. But just at that time, unhappily for the monarch, the subject began to see, and to see that he had a right to property and freedom. This marks a sufficient difference between the disputes of that day and the present. But there was another main cause of that rebellion, which, at this time, does not operate at all. The king was devoted to the hierarchy; his subjects were puritans and would not bear it. Every circumstance of ecclesiastical order and discipline was an abomination to them, and in his esteem an indispensable duty. And though at last he was obliged to give up many things, he would not abolish episcopacy; and until that were done his concessions could have no conciliating effect. These two concurring causes were, indeed, sufficient to set

three kingdoms in a flame. But they subsist not now, nor any other, I hope, notwithstanding the bustle made by the patriots, equal to the production of such terrible events.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

XLIV.

To MRS. COWPER.

CONSOLATION ON THE DEATH OF HER BROTHER, FREDERICK
MADAN, A SOLDIER WHO DIED IN AMERICA.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, May 10, 1780.

I do not write to comfort you : that office is not likely to be well performed by one who has no comfort for himself ; nor to comply with an impertinent ceremony, which in general might well be spared upon such occasions ; but because I would not seem indifferent to the concerns of those I have so much reason to esteem and love. If I did not sorrow for your brother's death, I should expect that nobody would for mine ; when I knew him he was much beloved, and I doubt not continued to be so. To live and die together is the lot of a few happy families, who hardly know what a separation means, and one sepulchre serves them all ; but the ashes of our kindred are dispersed indeed. Whether the American gulf has swallowed up any other of my relations I know not : it has made many mourners.

Believe me, my dear Cousin, though after a long silence which, perhaps, nothing less than the present concern could have prevailed with me to interrupt, as much as ever,

Your affectionate kinsman,

W. C.

XLV.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

HIS DRAWING ACQUIREMENTS—A RAVEN IN A STORM.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 10, 1780.

JAMES ANDREWS, who is my Michael Angelo, pays me many compliments on my success in the art of drawing; but I have not yet the vanity to think myself qualified to furnish your apartment. If I should ever attain to the degree of self-opinion requisite to such an undertaking, I shall labour at it with pleasure. I can only say, though I hope not with the affected modesty of Dr. Bentley, who said the same thing,

Me quoque dicunt
Vatem pastores. Sed non ego credulus illis.

A crow, rook, or raven, has built a nest in one of the young elm-trees at the side of Mrs. Aspray's orchard. In the violent storm that blew yesterday morning, I saw it agitated to a degree that seemed to threaten its immediate destruction, and versified the following thoughts upon the occasion.¹

W. C.

XLVI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.ON LETTER-WRITING—POPE'S LETTERS—GRACEFUL COMPLIMENT
TO MRS. UNWIN, JUNIOR.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, June 8, 1780.

It is possible I might have indulged myself in the pleasure of writing to you, without waiting for a letter

¹ Cowper's fable of the Raven concluded this letter.

from you, but for a reason which you will not easily guess. Your mother communicated to me the satisfaction you expressed in my correspondence, that you thought me entertaining and clever, and so forth : now you must know I love praise dearly, especially from the judicious, and those who have so much delicacy themselves as not to offend mine in giving it. But then I found this consequence attending, or likely to attend, the eulogium you bestowed—if my friend thought me witty before, he shall think me ten times more witty hereafter—where I joked once I will joke five times ; and, for one sensible remark, I will send him a dozen. Now this foolish vanity would have spoiled me quite, and would have made me as disgusting a letter-writer as Pope, who seems to have thought that unless a sentence was well turned, and every period pointed with some conceit, it was not worth the carriage. Accordingly he is to me, except in a very few instances, the most disagreeable maker of epistles that ever I met with. I was willing, therefore, to wait till the impression your commendation had made upon the foolish part of me was worn off, that I might scribble away as usual, and write my uppermost thoughts, and those only.

AN ENGLISH VERSIFICATION OF A THOUGHT THAT POPPED INTO
MY HEAD ABOUT TWO MONTHS SINCE.

Sweet stream ! that winds through yonder glade—
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid !
Silent and chaste she steals along
Far from the world's gay, busy throng ;
With gentle, yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destined course :

Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and bless'd where'er she goes :
Pure-bosom'd as that watery glass,
And Heav'n reflected in her face !

Now this is not so exclusively applicable to a maiden, as to be the sole property of your sister Shuttleworth. If you look at Mrs. Unwin, you will see that she has not lost her right to this just praise by marrying you.

Your mother sends her love to all, and mine comes jogging along by the side of it.

Yours,

W. C.

XLVII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

THE RIOTS IN LONDON—THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION.

DEAR SIR,

Osney, June 12, 1780.

WE accept it as an effort of your friendship, that you could prevail with yourself, in a time of such terror and distress, to send us repeated accounts of yours and Mrs. Newton's welfare ; you supposed, with reason enough, that we should be apprehensive for your safety, situated as you were, apparently, within the reach of so much danger. We rejoice that you have escaped it all, and that, except the anxiety which you must have felt, both for yourselves and others, you have suffered nothing upon this dreadful occasion. A metropolis in flames, and a nation in ruins, are subjects of contemplation for such a mind as yours that will leave a lasting impression behind them. It is well

that the design died in the execution, and will be buried, I hope never to rise again, in the ashes of its own combustion. There is a melancholy pleasure in looking back upon such a scene, arising from a comparison of possibilities with facts ; the enormous bulk of the intended mischief with the abortive and partial accomplishment of it. Much was done, more indeed than could have been supposed practicable in a well-regulated city, not unfurnished with a military force for its protection. But surprise and astonishment seem at first to have struck every nerve of the police with a palsy, and to have disarmed government of all its powers.

I congratulate you upon the wisdom that withheld you from entering yourself a member of the Protestant Association. Your friends who did so have reason enough to regret their doing it, even though they should never be called upon. Innocent as they are, and they who know them cannot doubt of their being perfectly so, it is likely to bring an odium on the profession they make, that will not soon be forgotten. Neither is it possible for a quiet, inoffensive man, to discover, on a sudden, that his zeal has carried him into such company, without being to the last degree shocked at his imprudence. *Their* religion was an honourable mantle, like that of Elijah ; but the majority wore cloaks of Guy Fawkes' time, and meant nothing so little as what they pretended.

W. C.

XLVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

NEWS FROM AMERICA—THE RIOTS IN LONDON.

REVEREND AND DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, June 18, 1780.

THE affairs of kingdoms, and the concerns of individuals, are variegated alike with the chequer-work of joy and sorrow. The news of a great acquisition in America¹ has succeeded to terrible tumults in London; and the beams of prosperity are now playing upon the smoke of that conflagration which so lately terrified the whole land. These sudden changes, which are matter of every man's observation, and may therefore always be reasonably expected, serve to hold up the chin of despondency above water, and preserve mankind in general from the sin and misery of accounting existence a burden not to be endured; an evil we should be sure to encounter, if we were not warranted to look for a bright reverse of our most afflictive experiences. The Spaniards were sick of the war at the very commencement of it; and I hope that, by this time, the French themselves begin to find themselves a little indisposed, if not desirous of peace, which that restless and meddling temper of theirs is incapable of desiring for its own sake.

What could you possibly mean, slender as you are, by sallying out upon your two-walking-sticks at two

¹ The surrender of Charleston.

in the morning, in the midst of such a tumult? We admire your prowess, but cannot commend your prudence.

Our love attends you all, collectively and individually.

Yours,

W. C.

XLIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ANSWERS TO VARIOUS MATTERS IN HIS FRIEND'S LETTER—ON
THE BURNING OF LORD MANSFIELD'S HOUSE BY THE MOB.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 22, 1780.

A WORD or two in answer to two or three questions of yours, which I have hitherto taken no notice of. I am not in a scribbling mood, and shall therefore make no excursions to amuse either myself or you. The needful will be as much as I can manage at present—the playful must wait another opportunity.

I thank you for your offer of Robertson, but I have more reading upon my hands at this present writing than I shall get rid of in a twelvemonth, and this moment recollect that I have seen it already. He is an author that I admire much, with one exception, that I think his style is too laboured. Hume, as an historian, pleases me more.

I have read just enough of the *Biographia Britannica* to say that I have tasted it, and have no doubt but I shall like it. I am pretty much in the garden at this season of the year, so read but little. In summer-time I am as giddy-headed as a boy, and can settle to

nothing. Winter condenses me, and makes me lumpish and sober, and then I can read all day long.

For the same reasons I have no need of the landscapes at present; when I want them I will renew my application, and repeat the description; but it will hardly be before October.

Before I rose this morning, I composed the three following stanzas. I send them because I like them pretty well myself; and if you should not, you must accept this handsome compliment as an amends for their deficiencies. You may print the lines if you judge them worth it.¹

I have only time to add love, &c., and my two initials.

W. C.

L.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

PROPHECIES UNWITTINGLY MADE—CHARACTER OF HIS OWN
LETTERS—MR. NEWTON SLANDERED—THE DISTRESSED LACE-
MAKERS OF OLNEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 23, 1780.

YOUR reflections upon the state of London, the sins and enormities of that great city, while you had a distant view of it from Greenwich, seem to have been prophetic of the heavy stroke that fell upon it just after. Man often prophesies without knowing it; a Spirit speaks by him which is not his own, though he does not at that time suspect that he is under the influence of any other. Did he foresee what is always

¹ Verses on the burning of Lord Mansfield's house.

foreseen by Him who dictates what he supposes to be his own, he would suffer by anticipation, as well as by consequence ; and wish perhaps as ardently for the happy ignorance, to which he is at present so much indebted, as some have foolishly and inconsiderately done for a knowledge that would be but another name for misery.

And why have I said all this ; especially to you who have hitherto said it to me ? Not because I had the least desire of informing a wiser man than myself, but because the observation was naturally suggested by the recollection of your letter, and that letter, though not the last, happened to be uppermost in my mind. I can compare this mind of mine to nothing that resembles it more than to a board that is under the carpenter's plane (I mean, while I am writing to you) : the shavings are my uppermost thoughts ; after a few strokes of the tool, it acquires a new surface ; this again, upon a repetition of his task, he takes off, and a new surface still succeeds : whether the shavings of the present day will be worth your acceptance, I know not. I am unfortunately made neither of cedar nor of mahogany, but *truncus ficulnus, inutile lignum* ; consequently, though I should be planed till I am as thin as a wafer, it will be but rubbish to the last.

It is not strange that you should be the subject of a false report ; for the sword of slander, like that of war, devours one as well as another ; and a blameless character is particularly delicious to its unsparing appetite. But that you should be the object of such a report, you who meddle less with the designs of government than almost any man that lives under it, this is strange indeed. It is well, however, when they who

account it good sport to traduce the reputation of another, invent a story that refutes itself. I wonder they do not always endeavour to accommodate their fiction to the real character of the person : their tale would then at least have an air of probability, and it might cost a peaceable good man much more trouble to disprove it. But perhaps it would not be easy to discern what part of your conduct lies more open to such an attempt than another ; or what it is that you either say or do, at any time, that presents a fair opportunity to the most ingenious slanderer, to slip in a falsehood between your words, or actions, that shall seem to be of a piece with either. You hate compliment, I know ; but by your leave this is not one—it is a truth : worse and worse ! now I have praised you indeed. Well, you must thank yourself for it : it was absolutely done without the least intention on my part, and proceeded from a pen that, as far as I can remember, was never guilty of flattery since I knew how to hold it. He that slanders me, paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me, whiter—they both daub me ; and when I look in the glass of conscience, I see myself disguised by both : I had as lief my tailor should sew gingerbread-nuts on my coat instead of buttons, as that any man should call my Bristol stone a diamond. The tailor's trick would not at all embellish my suit, nor the flatterers make me at all the richer. I never make a present to my friend of what I dislike myself. Ergo (I have reached the conclusion at last), I did not mean to flatter you.

We have sent a petition to Lord Dartmouth, by this post, praying him to interfere in Parliament in behalf of the poor lace-makers. I say we, because I have

signed it; Mr. G. drew it up: Mr. — did not think it grammatical, therefore would not sign it. Yet I think Priscian himself would have pardoned the manner for the sake of the matter. I dare say, if his lordship does not comply with the prayer of it, it will not be because he thinks it of more consequence to write grammatically than that the poor should eat; but for some better reason.

My love to all under your roof.

Yours,

W. C.

LL.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

COMPASSION FOR THE POOR LACE-MAKERS.

MON AMI,

Olney, July 8, 1780.

IF you ever take the tip of the Chancellor's ear between your finger and thumb, you can hardly improve the opportunity to better purpose, than if you should whisper into it the voice of compassion and lenity to the lace-makers. I am an eye-witness to their poverty, and do know that hundreds in this little town are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry is but barely sufficient to keep them from it. I know that the bill, by which they would have been so fatally affected, is thrown out: but Lord Stormont threatens them with another; and if another like it should pass, they are undone. We lately sent a petition to Lord Dartmouth: I signed it, and am sure the contents are true. The purport of it was to inform

him that there are very near one thousand two hundred lace-makers in this beggarly town, the most of whom had reason enough, while the bill was in agitation, to look upon every loaf they bought as the last they should ever be able to earn. I can never think it good policy to incur the certain inconvenience of ruining thirty thousand in order to prevent a remote and possible damage, though to a much greater number. The measure is like a scythe, and the poor lace-makers are the sickly crop that trembles before the edge of it. The prospect of peace with America is like the streak of dawn in their horizon ; but this bill is like a black cloud behind it, that threatens their hope of a comfortable day with utter extinction.

I did not perceive till this moment that I had tacked two similes together ; a practice which, though warranted by the example of Homer, and allowed in an epic poem, is rather luxurious and licentious in a letter : lest I should add another, I conclude.

W. C.

LII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DRYDEN'S EPIGRAM ON MILTON.

Olney, July 11, 1780.

I HAVE often wondered that Dryden's illustrious epigram on Milton (in my mind the second-best that ever was made) has never been translated into Latin for the admiration of the learned in other countries. I have at last presumed to venture upon the task myself. The great closeness of the original, which is equal in that

respect to the most compact Latin I ever saw, made it extremely difficult.¹

Tres, tria sed longè distantia sæcula, vates
 Ostentant tribus é gentibus eximios.
 Græcia sublimem, cum majestate disertum
 Roma tulit, felix Anglia utrique parem.
 Partubus ex binis Natura exhausta, coacta est,
 Tertius ut fieret, consociare duos.

I have not one bright thought upon the Chancellor's recovery; nor can I strike off so much as one sparkling atom from that brilliant subject. It is not when I will, nor upon what I will, but as a thought happens to occur to me; and then I versify, whether I will or not. I never write but for my amusement; and what I write is sure to answer that end, if it answers no other. If, besides this purpose, the more desirable one of entertaining you be effected, I then receive double fruit of my labour, and consider this produce of it as a second crop, the more valuable because less expected. But when I have once remitted a composition to you, I have done with it. It is pretty certain that I shall never read it, or think of it again. From that moment I have constituted you sole judge of its accomplishments, if it has any, and of its defects, which it is sure to have.

W. C.

¹ DRYDEN'S EPIGRAM.

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
 Greece, Italy, and England did adorn:
 The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
 The next in majesty; in both the last.
 The force of Nature could no further go;
 To make a third, she joined the former two.

LIII.

To MRS. COWPER.

HIS ADVANCING IN YEARS—HIS TACITURNITY.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, July 20, 1780.

MR. NEWTON having desired me to be one of the party, I am come to meet him. You see me sixteen years older, at the least, than when I saw you last ; but the effects of time seem to have taken place rather on the outside of my head than within it. What was brown is become grey, but what was foolish remains foolish still. Green fruit must rot before it ripens, if the season is such as to afford it nothing but cold winds and dark clouds, that interrupt every ray of sunshine. My days steal away silently, and march on (as poor mad Lear would have made his soldiers march), as if they were shod with felt ; not so silently but that I hear them ; yet, were it not that I am always listening to their flight, having no infirmity that I had not when I was much younger, I should deceive myself with an imagination that I am still young.

I am fond of writing as an amusement, but do not always find it one. Being rather scantily furnished with subjects that are good for anything, and corresponding only with those who have no relish for such as are good for nothing, I often find myself reduced to the necessity, the disagreeable necessity, of writing about myself. This does not mend the matter much ; for though in a description of my own condition, I discover abundant materials to employ my pen upon, yet as the

task is not very agreeable to *me*, so I am sufficiently aware that it is likely to prove irksome to others. A painter, who should confine himself in the exercise of his art to the drawing of his own picture, must be a wonderful coxcomb, if he did not soon grow sick of his occupation ; and be peculiarly fortunate, if he did not make others as sick as himself.

Remote as your dwelling is from the late scene of riot and confusion, I hope that, though you could not but hear the report, you heard no more, and that the roarings of the mad multitude did not reach you. That was a day of terror to the innocent, and the present is a day of still greater terror to the guilty. The law was for a few moments like an arrow in the quiver, seemed to be of no use, and did no execution ; now it is an arrow upon the string, and many, who despised it lately, are trembling as they stand before the point of it.

I have talked more already than I have formerly done in three visits : you remember my taciturnity, never to be forgotten by those who knew me. Not to depart entirely from what might be, for aught I know, the most shining part of my character, I here shut my mouth, make my bow, and return to Olney.

W. C.

LIV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DIFFICULTY OF BREAKING SILENCE—LAWSUIT ABOUT
OLNEY BRIDGE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, July 27, 1780.

As two men sit silent, after having exhausted all their topics of conversation, one says—"It is very fine

weather,"—and the other says—"Yes ;"—one blows his nose, and the other rubs his eyebrows (by the way, this is very much in Homer's manner): such seems to be the case between you and me. After a silence of some days, I wrote you a long something, that (I suppose) was nothing to the purpose, because it has not afforded you materials for an answer. Nevertheless, as it often happens in the case above stated, one of the distressed parties, being deeply sensible of the awkwardness of a dumb duet, breaks silence again, and resolves to speak, though he has nothing to say. So it fares with me ; I am with you again in the form of an epistle ; though, considering my present emptiness, I have reason to fear that your only joy upon the occasion will be, that it is conveyed to you in a frank.

When I began, I expected no interruption. But if I had expected interruptions without end, I should have been less disappointed. First came the barber ; who, after having embellished the outside of my head, has left the inside just as unfurnished as he found it. Then came Olney bridge—not into the house, but into the conversation. The cause relating to it was tried on Tuesday at Buckingham. The judge directed the jury to find a verdict favourable to Olney. The jury consisted of one knave and eleven fools. The last-mentioned followed the afore-mentioned, as sheep follow a bellwether, and decided in direct opposition to the said judge. Then a flaw was discovered in the indictment. The indictment was quashed, and an order made for a new trial. The new trial will be in the King's Bench, where said knave and said fools will have nothing to do with it. So the men of Olney fling up their caps, and assure themselves of a complete

victory. A victory will save me and your mother many shillings, perhaps some pounds, which, except that it has afforded me a subject to write upon, was the only reason why I said so much about it. I know you take an interest in all that concerns us, and will consequently rejoice with us in the prospect of an event in which we are concerned so nearly.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LV.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

WHY HE SENDS HIS TRIFLES IN VERSE TO UNWIN RATHER
THAN TO HIM—A RIDDLE.

MY DEAR SIR,

Olney, July 30, 1780.

You may think perhaps that I deal more liberally with Mr. Unwin, in the way of poetical export, than I do with you, and I believe you have reason; the truth is this: if I walked the streets with a fiddle under my arm, I should never think of performing under the window of a Privy Councillor or a Chief Justice, but should rather make free with ears more likely to be open to such amusement. The trifles I produce in this way are indeed such trifles, that I cannot think them seasonable presents for you. Mr. Unwin himself would not be offended if I was to tell him that there is this difference between him and Mr. Newton: that the latter is already an apostle, while he himself is only undergoing the business of incubation, with a hope that he may be hatched in time. When my Muse

comes forth arrayed in sables, at least in a robe of graver cast, I make no scruple to direct her to my friend at Hoxton. This has been one reason why I have so long delayed the riddle. But lest I should seem to set a value upon it that I do not, by making it an object of still further inquiry, here it comes.

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
 And the parent of numbers that cannot be told,
 I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault,
 I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
 An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
 And yielded with pleasure—when taken by force.

W. C.

LVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

A LETTER MAY BE WRITTEN UPON ANYTHING OR NOTHING—
 HUMAN NATURE CONTINUES THE SAME, THOUGH FASHIONS
 CHANGE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, August 6, 1780.

You like to hear from me : this is a very good reason why I should write. But I have nothing to say : this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—
 “ Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in ; have you resolved never to speak again ? ” it would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of

instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything of nothing, just as that anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it: for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed; not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving, as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—"My good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the meantime to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling

mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the Gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people who resembled us so little in their taste should resemble us in anything else. But in everything else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly; and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of man at least has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims are just what they ever were. They wear, perhaps, a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior; but, in every other respect, a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

W. C.

LVII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

ESCAPE OF ONE OF HIS HARES.

Olney, August 21, 1780.

THE following occurrence ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met with. Last Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table when it

ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour-door inquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite Puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice-work with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me, that, having seen her just after she dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimbler, and carrying less weight than Thomas ; not expecting to see her again, but desirous to learn, if possible, what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt of men, women, children, and dogs ; that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and Puss ; she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort ; a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her ; she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought shelter in Mr. Wagstaff's tanyard, adjoining to old Mr. Drake's. Sturges' harvest men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way. There she encountered the tanpits full of water ; and while she was struggling out of one pit, and plunging into

another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket, to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we did not grudge a farthing of it. The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

I do not call this an answer to your letter, but such as it is I send it, presuming upon that interest which I know you take in my minutest concerns, which I cannot express better than in the words of Terence, a little varied : *Nihil mei a te alienum putas.*

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LVIII.

To MRS. COWPER.

L. MY COWPER'S DEATH—EFFECTS OF AGE—SEPARATION FROM HIS KINDRED.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, August 31, 1780.

I AM obliged to you for your long letter, which did not seem so ; and for your short one, which was more than I had any reason to expect. Short as it was, it conveyed to me two interesting articles of intelligence : an account of your recovering from a fever, and of Lady Cowper's death. The latter was, I suppose, to be expected ; for by what remembrance I have of her ladyship, who was never much acquainted with her, she had reached those years that are always found upon

the borders of another world. As for you, your time of life is comparatively of a youthful date. You may think of death as much as you please (you cannot think of it too much), but I hope you will live to think of it many years.

It costs me not much difficulty to suppose that my friends who were already grown old when I saw them last, are old still ; but it costs me a good deal sometimes to think of those who were at that time young, as being older than they were. Not having been an eye-witness of the change that time has made in them, and my former idea of them not being corrected by observation, it remains the same ; my memory presents me with this image unimpaired, and, while it retains the resemblance of what they were, forgets that by this time the picture may have lost much of its likeness, through the alteration that succeeding years have made in the original. I know not what impressions Time may have made upon your person ; for while his claws (as our grannams called them) strike deep furrows in some faces, he seems to sheathe them with much tenderness, as if fearful of doing injury, in others. But though an enemy to the person, he is a friend to the mind, and you have found him so. Though, even in this respect, his treatment of us depends upon what he meets with at our hands ; if we use him well, and listen to his admonitions, he is a friend indeed ; but otherwise the worst of enemies, who takes from us daily something that we valued, and gives us nothing better in its stead. It is well with them who, like you, can stand a-tiptoe on the mountain-top of human life, look down with pleasure upon the valley they have passed, and sometimes stretch their wings in joyful

hope of a happy flight into eternity. Yet a little while, and your hope will be accomplished.

When you can favour me with a little account of your own family, without inconvenience, I shall be glad to receive it; for though separated from my kindred by little more than half a century of miles, I know as little of their concerns as if oceans and continents were interposed between us.

Yours, my dear cousin,

W. C.

LIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA—COMMISSION FOR A HOMER AND
CLAVIS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, Sept. 3, 1780.

I AM glad you are so provident, and that, while you are young, you have furnished yourself with the means of comfort in old age. Your crutch and your pipe may be of use to you (and may they be so!) should your years be extended to an antediluvian date; and for your perfect accommodation, you seem to want nothing but a clerk called Snuffle, and a sexton of the name of Skeleton, to make your ministerial equipage complete.

I think I have read as much of the first volume of the Biography as I shall ever read. I find it very amusing; more so perhaps than it would have been had they sifted their characters with more exactness, and admitted none but those who had in some way or other entitled themselves to immortality, by deserving

well of the public. Such a compilation would perhaps have been more judicious, though I confess it would have afforded less variety. The priests and the monks of earlier, and the doctors of later days, who have signalized themselves by nothing but a controversial pamphlet, long since thrown by, and never to be perused again, might have been forgotten, without injury or loss to the national character for learning or genius. This observation suggested to me the following lines, which may serve to illustrate my meaning, and at the same time to give my criticism a sprightlier air :

Oh ! fond attempt, to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot !
In vain, recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age ;
Those twinkling, tiny lustres of the land
Drop one by one, from Fame's neglecting hand ;
Lethæan gulfs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
So when a child (as playful children use)
Has burned to cinder a stale last-year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
There goes the parson—O illustrious spark !
And there—scarce less illustrious—goes the clerk.

Virgil admits none but worthies into the Elysian fields. I cannot recollect the lines in which he describes them all, but these in particular I well remember :

*Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo,
Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes.*

A chaste and scrupulous conduct like this would well

become the writer of national biography. But enough of this.

Our respects attend Miss Shuttleworth, with many thanks for her intended present. Some purses derive all their value from their contents, but these will have an intrinsic value of their own; and though mine should be often empty, which is not an improbable supposition, I shall still esteem it highly on its own account.

If you could meet with a second-hand Virgil, ditto Homer, both Iliad and Odyssey, together with a Clavis, for I have no Lexicon, and all tolerably cheap, I shall be obliged to you if you will make the purchase.

Yours,

W. C.

LX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THOUGHTS ON EARLY EDUCATION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, September 7, 1780.

As many gentlemen as there are in the world who have children, and heads capable of reflecting upon the important subject of their education, so many opinions there are about it; and many of them just and sensible, though almost all differing from each other. With respect to the education of boys, I think they are generally made to draw in Latin and Greek trammels too soon. It is pleasing, no doubt, to a parent, to see his child already in some sort a proficient in those languages, at an age when most others are entirely

ignorant of them ; but hence it often happens, that a boy, who could construe a fable of Æsop at six or seven years of age, having exhausted his little stock of attention and diligence in making that notable acquisition, grows weary of his task, conceives a dislike for study, and perhaps makes but a very indifferent progress afterwards. The mind and body have in this respect a striking resemblance of each other. In childhood, they are both nimble, but not strong ; they can skip and frisk about with a wonderful agility, but hard labour spoils them both. In maturer years, they become less active, but more vigorous, more capable of a fixed application, and can make themselves sport with that which a little earlier would have affected them with intolerable fatigue. I should recommend it to you, therefore (but after all you must judge for yourself), to allot the two next years of little John's scholarship to writing and arithmetic ; together with which, for variety's sake, and because it is capable of being formed into an amusement, I would mingle geography, a science (which, if not attended to betimes, is seldom made an object of much consideration) essentially necessary to the accomplishment of a gentleman, yet (as I know by sad experience) imperfectly, if at all, inculcated in the schools. Lord Spencer's son, when he was four years of age, knew the situation of every kingdom, country, city, river, and remarkable mountain in the world. For this attainment, which I suppose his father had never made, he was indebted to a plaything ; having been accustomed to amuse himself with those maps which are cut into several compartments, so as to be thrown into a heap of confusion, that they may be put together again with an exact coincidence of

all their angles and bearings, so as to form a perfect whole.

If he begins Latin and Greek at eight, or even at nine years of age, it is surely soon enough. Seven years, the usual allowance for these acquisitions, are more than sufficient for the purpose, especially with his readiness in learning; for you would hardly wish to have him qualified for the university before fifteen,—a period, in my mind, much too early for it, and when he could hardly be trusted there without the utmost danger to his morals. Upon the whole, you will perceive that in my judgment the difficulty, as well as the wisdom, consists more in bridling in and keeping back a boy of his parts, than in pushing him forward. If, therefore, at the end of the two next years, instead of putting a grammar into his hand, you should allow him to amuse himself with some agreeable writers upon the subject of natural philosophy for another year, I think it would answer well. There is a book called “*Cosmotheoria Puerilis*,” there are Derham’s “*Physico and Astro-theology*,” together with several others, in the same manner, very intelligible even to a child, and full of useful instruction.

W. C.

LXI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE SAME SUBJECT—PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, September 17, 1780.

You desire my further thoughts on the subject of education. I send you such as had for the most part

occurred to me when I wrote last, but could not be comprised in a single letter. They are indeed on a different branch of this interesting theme, but not less important than the former.

I think it your happiness, and wish you to think it so yourself, that you are in every respect qualified for the task of instructing your son, and preparing him for the university, without committing him to the care of a stranger. In my judgment, a domestic education deserves the preference to a public one on a hundred accounts, which I have neither time nor room to mention. I shall only touch upon two or three that I cannot but consider as having a right to your most earnest attention.

In a public school, or indeed in any school, his morals are sure to be but little attended to, and his religion not at all. If he can catch the love of virtue from the fine things that are spoken of it in the classics, and the love of holiness from a customary attendance upon such preaching as he is likely to hear, it will be well ; but I am sure you have had too many opportunities to observe the inefficacy of such means, to expect any such advantage from them. In the meantime, the more powerful influence of bad example, and perhaps bad company, will continually counterwork these only preservatives he can meet with, and may possibly send him home to you, at the end of five or six years, such as you will be sorry to see him. You escaped indeed the contagion yourself ; but a few instances of happy exemption from a general malady are not sufficient warrant to conclude, that it is therefore not infectious, or may be encountered without danger.

You have seen too much of the world, and are a

man of too much reflection, not to have observed that, in proportion as the sons of a family approach to years of maturity, they lose a sense of obligation to their parents, and seem at last almost divested of that tender affection which the nearest of all relations seems to demand from them. I have often observed it myself, and have always thought I could sufficiently account for it, without laying all the blame upon the children. While they continue in their parents' house, they are every day obliged, and every day reminded how much it is their interest, as well as duty, to be obliging and affectionate in return. But at eight or nine years of age the boy goes to school. From that moment he becomes a stranger in his father's house. The course of parental kindness is interrupted. The smiles of his mother, those tender admonitions, and the solicitous care of both his parents, are no longer before his eyes: year after year he feels himself more and more detached from them, till at last he is so effectually weaned from the connexion, as to find himself happier anywhere than in their company.

I should have been glad of a frank for this letter, for I have said but little of what I could say upon the subject, and perhaps I may not be able to catch it by the end again. If I can, I shall add to it hereafter.

Yours,

W. C.

LXII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

FAVOURS PRIVATE EDUCATION—SCHOOL FRIENDSHIPS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, October 5, 1780.

Now for the sequel. You have anticipated one of my arguments in favour of a private education, therefore I need say but little about it. The folly of supposing that the mother-tongue, in some respects the most difficult of all tongues, may be acquired without a teacher, is predominant in all the public schools that I have ever heard of. To pronounce it well, to speak and to write it with fluency and elegance, are no easy attainments; not one in fifty of those who pass through Westminster and Eton arrive at any remarkable proficiency in these accomplishments; and they that do are more indebted to their own study and application for it, than to any instruction received there. In general, there is nothing so pedantic as the style of a schoolboy, if he aims at any style at all; and if he does not, he is of course inelegant, and perhaps ungrammatical; a defect, no doubt in great measure owing to want of cultivation; for the same lad that is often commended for his Latin, frequently would deserve to be whipped for his English, if the fault were not more his master's than his own. I know not where this evil is so likely to be prevented as at home; supposing always, nevertheless (which is the case in your instance), that the boy's parents, and their acquaintance, are persons of elegance and taste them-

selves. For to converse with those who converse with propriety, and to be directed to such authors as have refined and improved the language by their productions, are advantages which he cannot elsewhere enjoy in an equal degree. And though it requires some time to regulate the taste and fix the judgment, and these effects must be gradually wrought even upon the best understanding, yet I suppose much less time will be necessary for the purpose than could at first be imagined, because the opportunities of improvement are continual.

A public education is often recommended as the most effectual remedy for that bashful and awkward restraint, so epidemical among the youth of our country. But I verily believe that, instead of being a cure, it is often the cause of it. For seven or eight years of his life, the boy has hardly seen or conversed with a man, or a woman, except the maids at his boarding-house. A gentleman or a lady are consequently such novelties to him, that he is perfectly at a loss to know what sort of behaviour he should preserve before them. He plays with his buttons, or the strings of his hat ; he blows his nose, and hangs down his head ; is conscious of his own deficiency to a degree that makes him quite unhappy, and trembles lest any one should speak to him, because that would quite overwhelm him. Is not all this miserable shyness the effect of his education ? To me it appears to be so. If he saw good company every day, he would never be terrified at the sight of it ; and a room full of ladies and gentlemen would alarm him no more than the chairs they sit on. Such is the effect of custom.

I need add nothing further on this subject, because I believe little John is as likely to be exempted from this weakness as most young gentlemen we shall meet with. He seems to have his father's spirit in this respect, in whom I could never discern the least trace of bashfulness, though I have often heard him complain of it. Under your management, and the influence of your example, I think he can hardly fail to escape it. If he does, he escapes that which has made many a man uncomfortable for life ; and ruined not a few, by forcing them into mean and dishonourable company, where only they could be free and cheerful.

Connexions formed at school are said to be lasting, and often beneficial. There are two or three stories of this kind upon record, which would not be so constantly cited as they are, whenever this subject happens to be mentioned, if the chronicle that preserves their remembrance had many besides to boast of. For my own part, I found such friendships, though warm enough in their commencement, surprisingly liable to extinction ; and of seven or eight, whom I had selected for intimates out of about three hundred, in ten years' time not one was left me. The truth is, that there may be, and often is, an attachment of one boy to another, that looks very like a friendship ; and while they are in circumstances that enable them mutually to oblige and to assist each other, promises well, and bids fair to be lasting. But they are no sooner separated from each other, by entering into the world at large, than other connexions, and new employments, in which they no longer share together, efface the remembrance of what passed in earlier days, and they become strangers to each other for ever. Add to this

the *man* frequently differs so much from the *boy*, his principles, manners, temper, and conduct, undergo so great an alteration, that we no longer recognise in him our old playfellow, but find him utterly unworthy and unfit for the place he once held in our affections.

To close this article, as I did the last, by applying myself immediately to the present concern, little John is happily placed above all occasion for dependence on all such precarious hopes, and need not be sent to school in quest of some great man in embryo, who may possibly make his fortune.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LXIII.

To MRS. NEWTON.

ON MR. NEWTON'S GOING TO RAMSGATE, AND AGAIN VIEWING
THE SEA.

DEAR MADAM,

Olney, October 5, 1780.

WHEN a lady speaks, it is not civil to make her wait a week for an answer. I received your letter within this hour, and, foreseeing that the garden will engross much of my time for some days to come, have seized the present opportunity to acknowledge it. I congratulate you on Mr. Newton's safe arrival at Ramsgate, making no doubt but that he reached that place without difficulty or danger, the road thither from Canterbury being so good as to afford room for neither. He has now a view of the element with which he was once so familiar, but which I think he has not seen

for many years. The sight of his old acquaintance will revive in his mind a pleasing recollection of past deliverances, and when he looks at him from the beach, he may say, "You have formerly given me trouble enough, but I have cast anchor now where your billows can never reach me." It is happy for him that he can say so.

Mrs. Unwin returns you many thanks for your anxiety on her account. Her health is considerably mended upon the whole, so as to afford us a hope that it will be re-established.

Our love attends you.

Yours, dear Madam,

W. C.

LXIV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

VERSES ON A GOLDFINCH—HE MEANS TO CHARGE HIM A
HALFPENNY EACH COPY.

Olney, November 9, 1780.

I WROTE the following last summer.¹ The tragical occasion of it really happened at the next house to ours. I am glad when I can find a subject to work upon. A lapidary, I suppose, accounts it a laborious part of his business to rub away the roughness of the stone; but it is my amusement, and, if after all the polishing I can give it, it discovers some little lustre, I think myself well rewarded for my pains.

¹ Verses on a Goldfinch starved to death in his cage.

I shall charge you a halfpenny a-piece for every copy I send you, the short as well as the long. This is a sort of after-clap you little expected, but I cannot possibly afford them at a cheaper rate. If this method of raising money had occurred to me sooner, I should have made the bargain sooner: but I am glad I have hit upon it at last. It will be a considerable encouragement to my muse, and act as a powerful stimulus to my industry. If the American war should last much longer, I may be obliged to raise my price, but this I shall not do without a real occasion for it; it depends much upon Lord North's conduct in the article of supplies. If he imposes an additional tax on any thing that I deal in, the necessity of this measure, on my part, will be so apparent, that I dare say you will not dispute it.

W. C.

LXV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

POETICAL REPORTS OF LAW CASES—SENDS HIS CASE OF
NOSE *v.* EYES.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, December 1780.

POETICAL reports of law cases are not very common, yet it seems to me desirable that they should be so. Many advantages would accrue from such a measure. They would, in the first place, be more commonly deposited in the memory, just as linen, grocery, or other such matters, when neatly packed, are known to occupy less room, and to lie more conveniently in any trunk, chest, or box, to which they may be committed. In the next

place, being divested of that infinite circumlocution, and the endless embarrassment in which they are involved by it, they would become surprisingly intelligible in comparison with their present obscurity. And lastly, they would by this means be rendered susceptible of musical embellishment; and, instead of being quoted in the country with that dull monotony which is so wearisome to bystanders, and frequently lulls even the judges themselves to sleep, might be rehearsed in recitation; which would have an admirable effect in keeping the attention fixed and lively, and could not fail to disperse that heavy atmosphere of sadness and gravity which hangs over the jurisprudence of our country. I remember many years ago being informed by a relation of mine, who in his youth had applied himself to the study of the law, that one of his fellow-students, a gentleman of sprightly parts, and very respectable talents of the poetical kind, did actually engage in the prosecution of such a design; for reasons, I suppose, somewhat similar to, if not the same with, those I have now suggested. He began with Coke's Institutes; a book so rugged in its style, that an attempt to polish it seemed a Herculean labour, and not less arduous and difficult than it would be to give the smoothness of the rabbit's fur to the prickly back of a hedgehog. But he succeeded to admiration, as you will perceive by the following specimen, which is all that my said relation could recollect of the performance.

Tenant in fee
Simple, is he,
And need neither quake nor quiver,
Who hath his lands
Free from demands,
To him and his heirs for ever.

You have an ear for music, and a taste for verse, which saves me the trouble of pointing out, with a critical nicety, the advantages of such a version. I proceed, therefore, to what I at first intended, and to transcribe the record of an adjudged case thus managed, to which indeed what I premised was intended merely as an introduction.¹

W. C.

LXVI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

FINE WEATHER HINDERS HIM FROM WRITING — MEN OF ASPERITY DO NOT CONSULT THE FINE FEELINGS OF OTHERS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, April 2, 1781.

FINE weather, and a variety of *extraforaneous* occupations (search Johnson's dictionary for the word, and if not found there, insert it; for it saves a deal of circumlocution, and is very lawfully compounded), make it difficult (excuse the length of a parenthesis, which I did not foresee the length of when I began it, and which may perhaps a little perplex the sense of what I am writing; though, as I seldom deal in that figure of speech, I have the less need to make an apology for doing it at present), make it difficult (I say) for me to find opportunities for writing. My morning is engrossed by the garden; and in the afternoon, till I have drunk tea, I am fit for nothing. At five o'clock we walk; and when the walk is over, lassitude recommends rest,

¹ This letter concluded with the poetical law case of Nose, plaintiff,—Eyes, defendants.

and again I become fit for nothing. The current hour, therefore, which (I need not tell you) is comprised in the interval between four and five, is devoted to your service, as the only one in the twenty-four which is not otherwise engaged.

I do not wonder that you have felt a great deal upon the occasion you mention in your last, especially on account of the asperity you have met with in the behaviour of your friend. Reflect, however, that, as it is natural to you to have very fine feelings, it is equally natural to some other tempers to leave those feelings entirely out of the question, and to speak to you, and to act towards you, just as they do towards the rest of mankind, without the least attention to the irritability of your system. Men of a rough and unsparing address should take great care that they be always in the right; the justness and propriety of their sentiments and censures being the only tolerable apology that can be made for such a conduct, especially in a country where civility of behaviour is inculcated even from the cradle. But, in the instance now under our contemplation, I think you a sufferer under the weight of an animadversion not founded in truth, and which, consequently, you did not deserve. I account him faithful in the pulpit who dissembles nothing that he believes, for fear of giving offence. To accommodate a discourse to the judgment and opinion of others for the sake of pleasing them, though by doing so we are obliged to depart widely from our own, is to be unfaithful to ourselves at least, and cannot be accounted fidelity to Him whom we profess to serve. But there are few men who do not stand in need of the exercise of charity and forbearance; and the gentleman in question has

afforded you an ample opportunity in this respect to show how readily, though differing in your views, you can practise all that he could possibly expect from you, if your persuasion corresponded exactly with his own.

Yours,

W. C.

LXVII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

A WOMAN'S "MUST"—INTIMATION THAT HE HAS A VOLUME
IN THE PRESS.

May 1, 1781.

YOUR mother says I *must* write, and *must* admits of no apology; I might otherwise plead, that I have nothing to say, that I am weary, that I am dull, that it would be more convenient, therefore, for you, as well as for myself, that I should let it alone; but all these pleas, and whatever pleas besides, either disinclination, indolence, or necessity might suggest, are over-ruled, as they ought to be, the moment a lady adduces her irrefragable argument, *you must*. You have still, however, one comfort left, that what I must write, you may, or may not read, just as it shall please you; unless Lady Anne at your elbow should say, you *must* read it, and then, like a true knight, you will obey, without looking for a remedy.

In the press, and speedily will be published, in one volume, octavo, price three shillings, "Poems, by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq." You may suppose, by the size of the publication, that the greatest part of them have been long kept secret,

because you yourself have never seen them ; but the truth is, that they are most of them, except what you have in your possession, the produce of the last winter. Two-thirds of the compilation will be occupied by four pieces, the first of which sprang up in the month of December, and the last of them in the month of March. They contain, I suppose, in all, about two thousand and five hundred lines ; are known, or to be known in due time, by the names of " Table Talk ;" " The Progress of Error ;" " Truth ;" " Expostulation." Mr. Newton writes a preface, and Johnson is the publisher. The principal, I may say the only reason why I never mentioned to you, till now, an affair which I am just going to make known to all the world (if *that* Mr. All-the-world should think it worth his knowing), has been this—that till within these few days, I had not the honour to know it myself. This may seem strange, but it is true ; for not knowing where to find underwriters who would choose to insure them ; and not finding it convenient to a purse like mine to run any hazard, even upon the credit of my own ingenuity, I was very much in doubt for some weeks, whether any bookseller would be willing to subject himself to an ambiguity, that might prove very expensive in case of a bad market. But Johnson has heroically set all peradventures at defiance, and takes the whole charge upon himself. So out I come. I shall be glad of my Translations from Vincent Bourne in your next frank. My Muse will lay herself at your feet immediately on her first public appearance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C

LXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

HIS COMING VOLUME.

MY DEAR SIR,

Olney, May 9, 1781.

I AM in the press, and it is in vain to deny it. But how mysterious is the conveyance of intelligence from one end to the other of your great city! Not many days since, except one man, and he but little taller than yourself, all London was ignorant of it; for I do not suppose that the public prints have yet announced these most agreeable tidings, the title-page, which is the basis of the advertisement, having so lately reached the publisher; and now it is known to you, who live at least two miles distant from my confidant upon the occasion.

My labours are principally the production of the last winter; all, indeed, except a few of the minor pieces. When I can find no other occupation, I think; and when I think, I am very apt to do it in rhyme. Hence it comes to pass that the season of the year which generally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfolds mine, such as they are, and crowns me with a winter garland. In this respect, therefore, I and my contemporary bards are by no means upon a par. They write when the delightful influences of fine weather, fine prospects, and a brisk motion of the animal spirits, make poetry almost the language of nature; and I, when icicles depend from all the leaves of the Parnassian laurel, and when a reasonable man would as little expect to succeed in verse, as to hear a blackbird

whistle. This must be my apology to you for whatever want of fire and animation you may observe in what you will shortly have the perusal of. As to the public, if they like me not, there is no remedy. A friend will weigh and consider all disadvantages, and make as large allowances as an author can wish, and larger, perhaps, than he has any right to expect ; but not so the world at large ; whatever they do not like, they will not, by any apology, be persuaded to forgive ; and it would be in vain to tell *them*, that I wrote my verses in January, for they would immediately reply, "Why did you not write them in May?" a question that might puzzle a wiser head than we poets are generally blessed with.

W. C.

LXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

WHY HE SENT HIS INTENDED PUBLICATION FIRST TO
MR. NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 10, 1781.

It is Friday ; I have just drunk tea, and just perused your letter ; and though this answer to it cannot set off till Sunday, I obey the warm impulse I feel, which will not permit me to postpone the business till the regular time of writing.

I expected you would be grieved ; if you had not been so, those sensibilities which attend you upon every other occasion must have left you upon this. I am sorry that I have given you pain, but not sorry that you have felt it. A concern of that sort would be absurd, because it would be to regret your friendship

for me, and to be dissatisfied with the effect of it. Allow yourself, however, three minutes only for reflection, and your penetration must necessarily dive into the motives of my conduct. In the first place, and by way of preface, remember that I do not (whatever your partiality may incline you to do) account it of much consequence to any friend of mine, whether he is or is not employed by me upon such an occasion. But all affected renunciations of poetical merit apart (and all unaffected expressions of the sense I have of my own littleness in the poetical character too), the obvious and only reason why I resorted to Mr. Newton, and not to my friend Unwin, was this, that the former lived in London, the latter at Stock ; the former was upon the spot to correct the press, to give instructions respecting any sudden alterations, and to settle with the publisher every thing that might possibly occur in the course of such a business: the latter could not be applied to for these purposes, without what would be a manifest encroachment on his kindness ; because it might happen that the troublesome office might cost him now and then a journey, which it was absolutely impossible for me to endure the thought of.

When I wrote to you for the copies you have sent me, I told you I was making a collection, but not with a design to publish. There is nothing truer than at that time I had not the smallest expectation of sending a volume of poems to the press. I had several small pieces that might amuse, but I would not, when I publish, make the amusement of the reader my only object. When the winter deprived me of other employments, I began to compose, and seeing six or seven months before me which would naturally afford me

much leisure for such a purpose, I undertook a piece of some length ; that finished, another ; and so on, till I had amassed the number of lines I mentioned in my last.

Believe of me what you please, but not that I am indifferent to you or your friendship for me on any occasion.

Yours,

W. C.

LXX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DELAYS IN PRINTING—VINCENT BOURNE, OF WESTMINSTER
SCHOOL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 23, 1781.

IF a writer's friends have need of patience, how much more the writer ! Your desire to see my muse in public, and mine to gratify you, must both suffer the mortification of delay. I expected that my trumpeter would have informed the world by this time of all that is needful for them to know upon such an occasion ; and that an advertising blast, blown through every newspaper, would have said, "The poet is coming !" But man, especially man that writes verse, is born to disappointments, as surely as printers and booksellers are born to be the most dilatory and tedious of all creatures. The plain English of this magnificent preamble is, that the season of publication is just elapsed, that the town is going into the country every day, and that my book cannot appear till they return, that is to say, not till next winter.

This misfortune, however, comes not without its attendant advantage ; I shall now have, what I should not otherwise have had, an opportunity to correct the press myself—no small advantage upon any occasion, but especially important, where poetry is concerned. A single erratum may knock out the brains of a whole passage, and that, perhaps, of which, of all others, the unfortunate poet is the most proud. Add to this, that now and then there is to be found in a printing-house a presumptuous intermeddler, who will fancy himself a poet too, and, what is still worse, a better than he that employs him. The consequence is, that with cobbling, and tinkering, and patching on here and there a shred of his own, he makes such a difference between the original and the copy, that an author cannot know his own work again. Now as I choose to be responsible for nobody's dulness but my own, I am a little comforted when I reflect that it will be in my power to prevent all such impertinence ; and yet not without your assistance. It will be quite necessary that the correspondence between me and Johnson should be carried on without the expense of postage, because proof sheets would make double or treble letters ; which expense, as in every instance it must occur twice, first when the packet is sent, and again when it is returned, would be rather inconvenient to me, who, as you perceive, am forced to live by my wits, and to him, who hopes to get a little matter, no doubt, by the same means. Half a dozen franks, therefore, to me, and *totidem* to him, will be singularly acceptable, if you can, without feeling it in any respect a trouble, procure them for me.

I am much obliged to you for your offer to support

me in a translation of Bourne. It is but seldom, however, and never, except for my amusement, that I translate, because I find it disagreeable to work by another man's pattern ; I should, at least, be sure to find it so in a business of any length. Again, *that* is epigrammatic and witty in Latin, which would be perfectly insipid in English ; and a translator of Bourne would frequently find himself obliged to supply what is called the turn, which is, in fact, the most difficult, and the most expensive part of the whole composition, and could not, perhaps, in many instances, be done with any tolerable success. If a Latin poem is neat, elegant, and musical, it is enough ; but English readers are not so easily satisfied. To quote myself, you will find, in comparing the Jackdaw with the original, that I was obliged to sharpen a point which, though smart enough in the Latin, would, in English, have appeared as plain, and as blunt, as the tag of a lace. I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in *his* way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to *him*. I love him, too, with a love of partiality, because he was usher of the fifth form at Westminster, when I passed through it. He was so good-natured, and so indolent, that I lost more than I got by him ; for he made me as idle as himself. He was such a sloven, as if he had trusted to his genius as a cloak for everything that could disgust you in his person ; and indeed in his writings he has almost made amends for all. His humour is entirely original ; he can speak of a magpie or a cat in terms so exquisitely appropriated to the character he draws, that one would suppose him animated by the spirit of the creature he describes.

And with all this drollery there is a mixture of rational and even religious reflection at times ; and always an air of pleasantry, good-nature, and humanity, that makes him, in my mind, one of the most amiable writers in the world. It is not common to meet with an author who can make you smile, and yet at nobody's expense ; who is always entertaining, and yet always harmless ; and who, though always elegant, and classical to a degree not always found in the classics themselves, charms more by the simplicity and playfulness of his ideas, than by the neatness and purity of his verse : yet such was poor Vinny. I remember seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy locks, and box his ears to put it out again.

Since I began to write long poems I seem to turn up my nose at the idea of a short one. I have lately entered upon one which, if ever finished, cannot easily be comprised in much less than a thousand lines. But this must make part of a second publication, and be accompanied in due time by others not yet thought of ; for it seems (what I did not know till the bookseller had occasion to tell me so) that single pieces stand no chance, and that nothing less than a volume will go down. You yourself afford me a proof of the certainty of this intelligence, by sending me franks which nothing less than a volume can fill. I have accordingly sent you one ; but am obliged to add, that had the wind been in any other point of the compass, or blowing as it does from the east, had it been less boisterous, you must have been contented with a much shorter letter ; but the abridgment of every other occupation is very favourable to that of writing.

I am glad I did not expect to hear from you by this

post, for the boy has lost the bag in which your letter must have been enclosed: another reason for my prolixity.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LXXI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

REQUESTING FRANKS—COWPER NO HORSEMAN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May, 1781.

I BELIEVE I never give you trouble without feeling more than I give: so much by way of preface and apology.

Thus stands the case. Johnson has begun to print, and Mr. Newton has already corrected the first sheet. This unexpected despatch makes it necessary for me to furnish myself with the means of communication, viz. the franks, as soon as may be. There are reasons (I believe I mentioned them in my last) why I choose to revise the proofs myself: nevertheless, if your delicacy must suffer the puncture of a pin's point in procuring the franks for me, I release you entirely from the task: you are as free as if I had never mentioned them. But you will oblige me by a speedy answer upon this subject, because it is expedient that the printer should know to whom he is to send his copy; and when the press is once set, those humble servants of the poets are rather impatient of any delay, because the types are wanted for other authors, who are equally in haste to be born.

This fine weather, I suppose, sets you on horseback, and allures the ladies into the garden. If I was at Stock, I should be of their party; and while they sat knotting or netting in the shade, should comfort myself with the thought, that I had not a beast under me, whose walk would seem tedious, whose trot would jumble me, and whose gallop might throw me into a ditch. What nature expressly designed me for, I have never been able to conjecture: I seem to myself so universally disqualified for the common and customary occupations and amusements of mankind. When I was a boy, I excelled at cricket and foot-ball; but the fame I acquired by achievements that way is long since forgotten, and I do not know that I have made a figure in anything since. I am sure, however, that she did not design me for a horseman; and that if all men were of my mind, there would be an end of all jockeyship for ever. I am rather straitened for time, and not very rich in materials; therefore, with our joint love to you all, conclude myself,

Yours ever,

W. C.

LXXII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

COWPER PLEASED WITH MRS. UNWIN'S APPROBATION—PARTIAL SHOWERS, WHAT INSTRUCTION TO BE GAINED FROM THEIR BEING SO.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, June 5, 1781.

If the old adage be true, that "he gives twice who gives speedily," it is equally true, that he who not only uses expedition in giving, but gives more than was

asked, gives thrice at least. Such is the style in which Mr. Smith confers a favour. He has not only sent me franks to Johnson, but under another cover has added six to you. These last, for aught that appears by your letter, he threw in of his own mere bounty. I beg that my share of thanks may not be wanting on this occasion, and that when you write to him next, you will assure him of the sense I have of the obligation, which is the more flattering as it includes a proof of his predilection in favour of the poems his franks are destined to enclose. May they not forfeit his good opinion hereafter, nor yours to whom I hold myself indebted in the first place, and who have equally given me credit for their deservings. Your mother says, that although there are passages in them containing opinions which will not be universally subscribed to, the world will at least allow what my great modesty will not permit me to subjoin. I have the highest opinion of her judgment; and know, by having experienced the soundness of them, that her observations are always worthy of attention and regard. Yet, strange as it may seem, I do not feel the vanity of an author, when she commends me; but I feel something better, a spur to my diligence, and a cordial to my spirits; both together animating me to deserve, at least not to fall short of, her expectations. For I verily believe, if my dulness should earn for me the character of a dunce, the censure would affect her more than me; not that I am insensible of the value of a good name, either as a man or an author. Without an ambition to attain it, it is absolutely unattainable under either of those descriptions. But my life having been in many respects a series of mortifications and disappointments, I am become

less apprehensive and impressible perhaps in some points than I should otherwise have been ; and though I should be exquisitely sorry to disgrace my friends, could endure my own share of the affliction with a reasonable measure of tranquillity.

These seasonable showers have poured floods upon all the neighbouring parishes, but have passed us by. My garden languishes, and what is worse the fields too languish, and the upland grass is burnt. These discriminations are not fortuitous. But if they are providential what do they import ? I can only answer as a friend of mine once answered a mathematical question in the schools, "*Prorsus nescio.*" Perhaps it is, that men, who will not believe what they cannot understand, may learn the folly of their conduct, while their very senses are made to witness against them ; and themselves in the course of Providence become the subjects of a thousand dispensations they cannot explain. But the end is never answered. The lesson is inculcated indeed frequently enough, but nobody learns it. Well : instruction, vouchsafed in vain, is (I suppose) a debt to be accounted for hereafter. You must understand this to be a soliloquy. I wrote my thoughts without recollecting that I was writing a letter, and to you.

W. C.

LXXIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

WHY HE WROTE THE POEM CALLED "TRUTH"—UNWIN WRONG
TO STARVE HIMSELF THROUGH BASHFULNESS

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, June 24, 1781.

THE letter you withheld so long, lest it should give me pain, gave me pleasure. Horace says, that poets are a waspish race; and from my own experience of the temper of two or three, with whom I was formerly connected, I can readily subscribe to the character he gives them. But for my own part, I have never yet felt that excessive irritability, which some writers discover, when a friend, in the words of Pope,

"Just hints a fault, or hesitates dislike."

Least of all would I give way to such an unseasonable ebullition, merely because a civil question is proposed to me with such gentleness, and by a man whose concern for my credit and character I verily believe to be sincere. I reply therefore, not peevishly, but with a sense of the kindness of your intentions, that I hope you may make yourself very easy on a subject, that I can perceive has occasioned you some solicitude. When I wrote the poem called "Truth," by which is intended Religious Truth, it was indispensably necessary that I should set forth that doctrine which I know to be true, and that I should pass what I understood to be a just censure upon opinions and persuasions that differ from,

or stand in direct opposition to it ; because, though some errors may be innocent, and even religious errors are not always pernicious, yet in a case where the faith and hope of a Christian are concerned, they must necessarily be destructive ; and because, neglecting this, I should have betrayed my subject ; either suppressing what, in my judgment, is of the last importance, or giving countenance, by a timid silence, to the very evils it was my design to combat. That you may understand me better, I will subjoin, that I wrote that poem on purpose to inculcate the eleemosynary character of the gospel, as a dispensation of mercy, in the most absolute sense of the word, to the exclusion of all claims of merit on the part of the receiver ; consequently to set the brand of invalidity upon the plea of works, and to discover, upon spiritual ground, the absurdity of that notion, which includes a solecism in the very terms of it, that man, by repentance and good works, may deserve the mercy of his Maker : I call it a solecism, because mercy deserved ceases to be mercy, and must take the name of justice. This is the opinion which I said, in my last, the world would not acquiesce in ; but except this, I do not recollect that I have introduced a syllable into any of my pieces, that they can possibly object to ; and even this I have endeavoured to deliver from doctrinal dryness, by as many pretty things, in the way of trinket and plaything, as I could muster upon the subject. So that if I have rubbed their gums, I have taken care to do it with a coral ; and even that coral embellished by the ribbon to which it is tied, and recommended by the tinkling of all the bells I could contrive to annex to it.

I remember a line in the *Odyssey*, which, literally translated, imports that there is nothing in the world more impudent than the belly. But had Homer met with an instance of modesty like yours, he would either have suppressed that observation, or at least have qualified it with an exception. I hope that, for the future, Mrs. Unwin will never suffer you to go to London, without putting some victuals in your pocket ; for what a strange article would it make in a newspaper, that a tall, well-dressed gentleman, by his appearance a clergyman, and with a purse of gold in his pocket, was found starved to death in the street ! How would it puzzle conjecture, to account for such a phenomenon ! Some would suppose that you had been kidnapped, like Betty Canning, of hungry memory ; others would say, the gentleman was a Methodist, and had practised a rigorous self-denial, which had unhappily proved too hard for his constitution ; but I will venture to say that nobody would divine the real cause, or suspect for a moment that your modesty had occasioned the tragedy in question. By the way, is it not possible, that the spareness and slenderness of your person may be owing to the same cause ? for surely it is reasonable to suspect, that the bashfulness which could prevail against you on so trying an occasion, may be equally prevalent on others. I remember having been told by Colman, that when he once dined with Garrick, he repeatedly pressed him to eat more of a certain dish, that he was known to be particularly fond of ; Colman as often refused, and at last declared he could not : " But could not you," says Garrick, " if you were in a dark closet by yourself ?" The same question might perhaps be put to you, with as much, or more propriety ; and therefore

I recommend it to you, either to furnish yourself with a little more assurance, or always to eat in the dark.

We sympathize with Mrs. Unwin ; and, if it will be any comfort to her to know it, can assure her, that a lady in our neighbourhood is always on such occasions, the most miserable of all things, and yet escapes with great facility through all the dangers of her state.

Yours, *ut semper*,

W. C.

LXXIV.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

“SLIDES INTO VERSE, AND HITCHES IN A RHYME.”

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, July 12, 1781.

I AM going to send, what when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, “I suppose, there’s nobody knows, whether what I have got be verse or not : by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme ; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before ?”

I have writ “Charity,” not for popularity, but as well as I could, in hopes to do good ; and if the reviewer should say “to be sure, the gentleman’s Muse wears Methodist shoes ; you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard have little regard for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the modern day ; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, ’tis only her plan, to catch, if she can, the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production

on a new construction. She has baited her trap, in hopes to snap all that may come, with a sugar-plum." His opinion in this, will not be amiss; 'tis what I intend, my principal end; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said, and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here another year.

I have heard before, of a room with a floor, laid upon springs, and such-like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you were forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing: and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penned; which that you may do, ere Madam and you are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me,

W. C.

LXXV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THERE IS A LIMIT TO FORBEARANCE—FIRST MENTION OF LADY AUSTEN—WHAT IS NOW CALLED A PIC-NIC, AT THE SPINNIE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, July 29, 1781.

NOTHING is so contrary to the genius of the gospel as the gratification of resentment and revenge ; but I cannot easily persuade myself to think, that the Author of that dispensation could possibly advise his followers to consult their own peace at the expense of the peace of society, or inculcate a universal abstinence from the use of lawful remedies, to the encouragement of injury and oppression.

By this time you are sufficiently aware that I think you have an indisputable right to recover at law, what is so dishonestly withheld from you. The fellow, I suppose, has discernment enough to see a difference between you and the generality of the clergy ; and cunning enough to conceive the purpose of turning your meekness and forbearance to good account, and of coining them into hard cash, which he means to put in his pocket. But I would disappoint him, and show him that though a Christian is not to be quarrelsome, he is not to be crushed ; and that, though he is but a worm before God, he is not such a worm as every selfish, unprincipled wretch may tread upon at his pleasure.

I lately heard a story, from a lady who spent many years of her life in France, somewhat to the present purpose. An abbé, universally esteemed for his piety, and especially for the meekness of his manners, had

yet undesignedly given some offence to a shabby fellow in his parish. The man, concluding he might do as he pleased with so forgiving and gentle a character, struck him on one cheek and bade him turn the other. The good man did so, and when he had received the two slaps, which he thought himself obliged to submit to, turned again and beat him soundly. I do not wish to see you follow the French gentleman's example, but I believe nobody that has heard the story condemns him much for the spirit he showed upon the occasion.

I had the relation from Lady Austen, sister to Mrs. Jones, wife of the minister at Clifton. She is a most agreeable woman, and has fallen in love with your mother and me ; insomuch, that I do not know but she may settle at Olney. Yesterday se'nnight we all dined together in the *Spinnie*, a most delightful retirement, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton of Weston. Lady Austen's lackey, and a lad that waits on me in the garden, drove a wheelbarrow full of eatables and drinkables to the scene of our *fête champêtre*. A board, laid over the top of the wheelbarrow, served us for a table ; our dining-room was a root-house, lined with moss and ivy. At six o'clock, the servants, who had dined under the great elm upon the ground, at a little distance, boiled the kettle, and the said wheelbarrow served us for a tea-table. We then took a walk into the wilderness, about half a mile off, and were at home again a little after eight, having spent the day together from noon till evening, without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other ; a happiness few parties of pleasure can boast of.

Yours, with our joint love,

W. C.

LXXVI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE BIRTH OF ANOTHER SON—HIS
POEM ON “RETIREMENT”—LADY AUSTEN ABOUT TO OCCUPY
PART OF THE HOUSE AT OLNEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, August 25, 1781.

WE rejoice with you sincerely in the birth of another son, and in the prospect you have of Mrs. Unwin's recovery: may your three children, and the next three, when they shall make their appearance, prove so many blessings to their parents, and make you wish you had twice the number. But what made you expect daily that you should hear from me? Letter for letter is the law of all correspondence whatsoever, and because I wrote last, I have indulged myself for some time in expectation of a sheet from you. Not that I govern myself entirely by the punctilio of reciprocation, but having been pretty much occupied of late, I was not sorry to find myself at liberty to exercise my discretion, and furnished with a good excuse if I chose to be silent.

I expected, as you remember, to have been published last spring, and was disappointed. The delay has afforded me an opportunity to increase the quantity of my publication by about a third; and if my muse has not forsaken me, which I rather suspect to be the case, may possibly yet add to it. I have a subject in hand, which promises me a great abundance of poetical matter, but which, for want of a something I am not able to describe, I cannot at present proceed with. The name

of it is "*Retirement*," and my purpose, to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end, and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life, when managed as it ought to be. In the course of my journey through this ample theme, I should wish to touch upon the characters, the deficiencies, and the mistakes of thousands, who enter on a scene of retirement, unqualified for it in every respect, and with such designs as have no tendency to promote either their own happiness or that of others. But, as I have told you before, there are times when I am no more a poet than I am a mathematician; and when such a time occurs, I always think it better to give up the point, than to labour it in vain. I shall yet again be obliged to trouble you for franks; the addition of three thousand lines, or near that number, having occasioned a demand which I did not always foresee; but your obliging friend, and your obliging self, having allowed me the liberty of application, I make it without apology.

The solitude, or rather the duality of our condition, at Olney, seems drawing to a conclusion. You have not forgot, perhaps, that the building we inhabit consists of two mansions. And because you have only seen the inside of that part of it which is in our occupation, I therefore inform you, that the other end of it is by far the most superb as well as the most commodious. Lady Austen has seen it, has set her heart upon it, is going to fit it up and furnish it, and, if she can get rid of the remaining two years of the lease of her London house, will probably enter upon it in a twelvemonth. You will be pleased with this intelligence, because I have already told you that she is a woman perfectly

well bred, sensible, and in every respect agreeable; and above all, because she loves your mother dearly. It has in my eyes (and I doubt not it will have the same in yours) strong marks of providential interposition.



THE HOUSE AT OLNEY.

A female friend, and one who bids fair to prove herself worthy of the appellation, comes, recommended by a variety of considerations, to such a place as Olney.

Since Mr. Newton went, and till this lady came, there was not in the kingdom a retirement more absolutely such than ours. We did not want company, but when it came we found it agreeable. A person that has seen much of the world, and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy, and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which, if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened. In case of illness, too, to which all are liable, it was rather a gloomy prospect, if we allowed ourselves to advert to it, that there was hardly a woman in the place from whom it would have been reasonable to have expected either comfort or assistance. The present curate's wife is a valuable person, but has a family of her own; and though a neighbour, is not a very near one. But if this plan is effected, we shall be, in a manner, one family; and, I suppose, never pass a day without some intercourse with each other.¹

¹ This intimacy took place, and was productive of some of the finest poems of Cowper; but it did not last long, and the house soon returned to the duality of Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. In the warmth of his admiration of Lady Austen, he had called her "Sister Anna," and had addressed some tender and elegant verses to her; but Mrs. Unwin, with more sense and coolness, could not help feeling apprehensive that his intimacy with a lady of such extraordinary talents, might lead him into perplexities of which he was by no means aware. In consequence, the two ladies had a little variance; but it is pleasant to know from Cowper's intimation to young Unwin, that the quarrel was not deadly. "I enclose a letter from Lady Austen, which I beg you to return me in your next. We are reconciled. She seized the first opportunity to embrace your mother with tears of the tenderest affection, and I of course am satisfied. We were all a little awkward at first, but are now as easy as ever."

Your mother sends her warm affections, and welcomes into the world the new-born William.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LXXVII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

A DISSIPATED WORLD—HE IS PERFECTLY AT EASE AS TO HIS
APPROACHING PUBLICATION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

October 6, 1781.

WHAT a world are you daily conversant with, which I have not seen these twenty years, and shall never see again! The arts of dissipation, I suppose are nowhere practised with more refinement of success than at the place of your present residence. By your account of it, it seems to be just what it was when I visited it; a scene of idleness and luxury, music, dancing, cards, walking, riding, bathing, eating, drinking, coffee, tea, scandal, dressing, yawning, sleeping; the rooms perhaps more magnificent, because the proprietors are grown richer, but the manners and occupations of the company just the same. Though my life has long been like that of a recluse, I have not the temper of one, nor am I in the least an enemy to cheerfulness and good humour; but I cannot envy you your situation: I even feel myself constrained to prefer the silence of this nook, and the snug fireside in our own diminutive parlour, to all the splendour and gaiety of Brighton.

You ask me, how I feel on the occasion of my approaching publication. Perfectly at my ease. If I

had not been pretty well assured beforehand that my tranquillity would be but little endangered by such a measure, I would never have engaged in it; for I cannot bear disturbance. I have had in view two principal objects: first, to amuse myself, and secondly, to compass that point in such a manner, that others might possibly be the better for my amusement. If I have succeeded, it will give me pleasure; but if I have failed, I shall not be mortified to the degree that might perhaps be expected. I remember an old adage (though not where it is to be found), "*Bene vixit, qui bene latuit*;" and if I had recollected it at the right time, it should have been the motto to my book. By the way, it will make an excellent one for "Retirement," if you can but tell me whom to quote for it. The critics cannot deprive me of the pleasure I have in reflecting, that, so far as my leisure has been employed in writing for the public, it has been conscientiously employed, with a view to their advantage. There is nothing agreeable, to be sure, in being chronicled for a dunce; but I believe there lives not a man upon earth who would be less affected by it than myself. With all this indifference to fame, which you know me too well to suppose me capable of affecting, I have taken the utmost pains to deserve it. This may appear a mystery or a paradox in practice, but it is true. I considered that the taste of the day is refined and delicate to excess, and that to disgust the delicacy of taste by a slovenly inattention to it, would be to forfeit at once all hope of being useful; and for this reason, though I have written more verse this last year than perhaps any man in England, I have finished, and polished, and touched, and retouched, with the utmost

care. If after all I should be converted into waste paper, it may be my misfortune, but it will not be my fault. I shall bear it with the most perfect serenity.

I do not mean to give —— a copy: he is a good-natured little man, and crows exactly like a cock, but knows no more of verse than the cock he imitates.

Whoever supposes that Lady Austen's fortune is precarious, is mistaken. I can assure you, upon the ground of the most circumstantial and authentic information, that it is both genteel and perfectly safe.

Yours,

W. C.

LXXVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON HIS RETURN FROM BRIGHTON—THE WORLD'S GAIETY A
SAD SPECTACLE.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, November 5, 1781.

I GIVE you joy of your safe return from the lips of the great deep. You did not discern many signs of sobriety, or true wisdom, among the people of Bright-helmstone, but it is not possible to observe the manners of a multitude, of whatever rank, without learning something: I mean, if a man has a mind like yours, capable of reflection. If he sees nothing to imitate, he is sure to see something to avoid; if nothing to congratulate his fellow-creatures upon, at least much to excite his compassion. There is not, I think, so melancholy a sight in the world (a hospital is not to be compared with it) as that of a thousand persons distinguished by the name of gentry, who, gentle

perhaps by nature, and made more gentle by education, have the appearance of being innocent and inoffensive, yet being destitute of all religion, or not at all governed by the religion they profess, are none of them at any great distance from an eternal state, where self-deception will be impossible, and where amusements cannot enter. Some of them, we may say, will be reclaimed; it is most probable indeed that some of them will, because mercy, if one may be allowed the expression, is fond of distinguishing itself by seeking its objects among the most desperate class; but the Scripture gives no encouragement to the warmest charity to hope for deliverance for them all. When I see an afflicted and an unhappy man, I say to myself, there is perhaps a man whom the world would envy, if they knew the value of his sorrows, which are possibly intended only to soften his heart, and to turn his affections toward their proper centre. But when I see or hear of a crowd of voluptuaries, who have no ears but for music, no eyes but for splendour, and no tongue but for impertinence and folly, I say, or at least I see occasion to say, This is madness. This persisted in must have a tragical conclusion. It will condemn you, not only as Christians unworthy of the name, but as intelligent creatures. You know by the light of nature, if you have not quenched it, that there is a God, and that a life like yours cannot be according to his will.

I ask no pardon of you for the gravity and gloominess of these reflections, which I stumbled on when I least expected it; though, to say the truth, these or others of a like complexion are sure to occur to me, when I think of a scene of public diversion like that you have lately left.

We rejoice that you have so much reason to be satisfied with John's proficiency. The more spirit he has the better, if his spirit is but manageable, and put under such management as your prudence and Mrs. Unwin's will suggest. I need not guard you against severity, of which I conclude there is no need, and which I am sure you are not at all inclined to practise without it; but perhaps if I was to whisper, "Beware of too much indulgence," I should only give a hint that the fondness of a father for a fine boy might seem to justify. I have no particular reason for the caution: at this distance it is not possible I should; but in a case like yours an admonition of that sort seldom wants propriety.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LXXIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON DRYDEN, POPE, AND PRIOR—GREATLY DISLIKES JOHNSON'S
CRITICISM ON PRIOR.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, January 5, 1782.

DID I allow myself to plead the common excuse of idle correspondents, and esteem it a sufficient reason for not writing, that I have nothing to write about, I certainly should not write now. But I have so often found, on similar occasions, when a great penury of matter has seemed to threaten me with an utter impossibility of hatching a letter, that nothing is necessary but to put pen to paper, and go on, in order to conquer

all difficulties—that, availing myself of past experience, I now begin with a most assured persuasion, that, sooner or later, one idea naturally suggesting another, I shall come to a most prosperous conclusion.

In the last Review, I mean in the last but one, I saw Johnson's critique upon Prior and Pope. I am bound to acquiesce in his opinion of the latter, because it has always been my own. I could never agree with those who preferred him to Dryden; nor with others (I have known such, and persons of taste and discernment too), who could not allow him to be a poet at all. He was certainly a mechanical maker of verses, and, in every line he ever wrote, we see indubitable marks of most indefatigable industry and labour. Writers who find it necessary to make such strenuous and painful exertions, are generally as phlegmatic as they are correct; but Pope was, in this respect, exempted from the common lot of authors of that class. With the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter, who draws a shrimp with the most minute exactness, he had all the genius of one of the first masters. Never, I believe, were such talents and such drudgery united. But I admire Dryden most, who has succeeded by mere dint of genius, and in spite of a laziness and carelessness almost peculiar to himself. His faults are numberless, and so are his beauties. His faults are those of a great man, and his beauties are such (at least sometimes) as Pope, with all his touching and retouching, could never equal. So far, therefore I have no quarrel with Johnson. But I cannot subscribe to what he says of Prior. In the first place, though my memory may fail me, I do not recollect that he takes any notice of his Solomon; in my mind

the best poem, whether we consider the subject of it or the execution, that he ever wrote. In the next place, he condemns him for introducing Venus and Cupid into his love-verses, and concludes it impossible his passion could be sincere, because when he would express it he has recourse to fables. But when Prior wrote, those deities were not so obsolete as they are at present. His contemporary writers, and some that succeeded him, did not think them beneath their notice. Tibullus, in reality, disbelieved their existence as much as we do ; yet Tibullus is allowed to be the prince of all poetical inamoratos, though he mentions them in almost every page. There is a fashion in these things, which the Doctor seems to have forgotten. But what shall we say of his fusty-rusty remarks upon Henry and Emma ? I agree with him, that morally considered both the knight and his lady are bad characters, and that each exhibits an example which ought not to be followed. The man dissembles in a way that would have justified the woman had she renounced him ; and the woman resolves to follow him at the expense of delicacy, propriety, and even modesty itself. But when the critic calls it a dull dialogue, who but a critic will believe him ? There are few readers of poetry of either sex, in this country, who cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them, who do not know that, instead of finding it tedious, they have been so delighted with the romantic turn of it, as to have overlooked all its defects, and to have given it a consecrated place in their memories, without ever feeling it a burthen. I wonder almost that, as the Bacchanals served Orpheus, the boys and girls do not tear this husky, dry commentator limb from limb, in

resentment of such an injury done to their darling poet. I admire Johnson as a man of great erudition and sense ; but when he sets himself up for a judge of writers upon the subject of love, a passion which I suppose he never felt in his life, he might as well think himself qualified to pronounce upon a treatise on horsemanship, or the art of fortification.

The next packet I receive will bring me, I imagine, the last proof sheet of my volume, which will consist of about three hundred and fifty pages, honestly printed. My public *entrée* therefore is not far distant.

Yours,

W. C.

LXXX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MORE ABOUT PRIOR—RECOMMENDS POETICAL PASSAGES TO
FURNISH HIS SON'S MEMORY.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, January 17, 1782.

I AM glad we agree in our opinion of King Critic, and the writers on whom he has bestowed his animadversions. It is a matter of indifference to me whether I think with the world at large, or not, but I wish my friends to be of my mind. The same work will wear a different appearance in the eyes of the same man, according to the different views with which he reads it : if merely for his amusement, his candour being in less danger of a twist from interest or prejudice, he is pleased with what is really pleasing, and is not over-

curious to discover a blemish, because the exercise of a minute exactness is not consistent with his purpose. But if he once becomes a critic by trade, the case is altered. He must then at any rate establish, if he can, an opinion in every mind of his uncommon discernment, and his exquisite taste. This great end he can never accomplish by thinking in the track that has been beaten under the hoof of public judgment. He must endeavour to convince the world, that their favourite authors have more faults than they are aware of, and such as they have never suspected. Having marked out a writer universally esteemed, whom he finds it for that very reason convenient to depreciate and traduce, he will overlook some of his beauties, he will faintly praise others, and in such a manner, as to make thousands more modest, though quite as judicious as himself, question whether they are beauties at all. Can there be a stronger illustration of all that I have said than the severity of Johnson's remarks upon Prior—I might have said the injustice? His reputation as an author who, with much labour indeed, but with admirable success, has embellished all his poems with the most charming ease, stood unshaken till Johnson thrust his head against it. And how does he attack him in this his principal forte? I cannot recollect his very words, but I am much mistaken indeed if my memory fails me with respect to the purport of them. "His words," he says, "appear to be forced into their proper places: there indeed we find them, but find likewise that their arrangement has been the effect of constraint, and that, without violence, they would certainly have stood in a different order." By your leave, most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with,

and would have come with a better grace from Curl or Dennis. Every man conversant with verse-writing knows, and knows by painful experience, that the familiar style is of all styles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic, to marshal the words of it in such an order as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness, harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of the rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish this task was Prior; many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original. And now to tell us, after we and our fathers have admired him for it so long, that he is an easy writer, indeed, but that his ease has an air of stiffness in it—in short, that his ease is not ease, but only something like it—what is it but a self-contradiction, an observation that grants what it is just going to deny, and denies what it has just granted in the same sentence and in the same breath? But I have filled the greatest part of my sheet with a very uninteresting subject. I will only say that, as a nation, we are not much indebted in point of poetical credit to this too sagacious and unmerciful judge; and that for myself in particular, I have reason to rejoice that he entered upon and exhausted the labours of his office before my poor volume could possibly become an object of them. By the way, you cannot have a book at the time you mention; I have lived a fortnight or more in expectation of the last sheet, which is not yet arrived.

You have already furnished John's memory with by

far the greatest part of what a parent would wish to store it with. If all that is merely trivial, and all that has an immoral tendency were expunged from our English poets, how would they shrink, and how would some of them completely vanish ! I believe there are some of Dryden's Fables which he would find very entertaining ; they are for the most part fine compositions, and not above his apprehension ; but Dryden has written few things that are not blotted here and there with an unchaste allusion, so that you must pick his way for him, lest he should tread in the dirt. You did not mention Milton's " Allegro " and " Penseroso," which I remember being so charmed with when I was a boy, that I was never weary of them. There are even passages in the paradisaical part of the " Paradise Lost," which he might study with advantage. And to teach him, as you can, to deliver some of the fine orations made in the Pandæmonium, and those between Satan, Ithuriel, and Zephon, with emphasis, dignity, and propriety, might be of great use to him hereafter. The sooner the ear is formed, and the organs of speech are accustomed to the various inflections of the voice which the rehearsal of those passages demands, the better. I should think, too, that " Thomson's Seasons " might afford him some useful lessons. At least they would have a tendency to give his mind an observing and a philosophical turn. I do not forget that he is but a child ; but I remember, that he is a child favoured with talents superior to his years. We were much pleased with his remarks on your almsgiving, and doubt not but it will be verified with respect to the two guineas you sent us, which have made four Christian people happy. Ships I have none, nor have touched a

pencil these three years : if ever I take it up again, which I rather suspect I shall not (the employment requiring stronger eyes than mine), it shall be at John's service.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LXXXI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

SENDS HIS BOOK TO LORD THURLOW.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, February 24, 1782.

IF I should receive a letter from you to-morrow, you must still remember, that I am not in your debt, having paid you by anticipation. Knowing that you take an interest in my publication, and that you have waited for it with some impatience, I write to inform you that, if it is possible for a printer to be punctual, I shall come forth on the 1st of March. I have ordered two copies to Stock ; one for Master John Unwin.

There are but few persons to whom I present my book. The Lord Chancellor is one. I enclose in a packet I send by this post to Johnson, a letter to his Lordship, which will accompany the volume ; and to you I enclose a copy of it, because I know you will have a friendly curiosity to see it. An author is an important character. Whatever his merits may be, the mere circumstance of authorship warrants his approach to persons whom otherwise perhaps he could hardly address without being deemed impertinent. He can do me no good. If I should happen to do him a little,

I shall be a greater man than he. I have ordered a copy likewise to Mr. Robert Smith.

I hope John continues to be pleased and to give pleasure. If he loves instruction, he has a tutor who can give him plentifully of what he loves; and with his natural abilities, his progress must be such as you would wish.

Yours,

W. C.

LXXXII.

To LORD THURLOW.

[Enclosed to Mr. Unwin.]

AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF FORMER INTIMACY.

MY LORD,

Olney, Bucks, February 25, 1782.

I MAKE no apology for what I account a duty; I should offend against the cordiality of our former friendship should I send a volume into the world, and forget how much I am bound to pay my particular respects to your Lordship upon that occasion. When we parted, you little thought of hearing from me again; and I as little that I should live to write to you; still less that I should wait on you in the capacity of an author.

Among the pieces I have the honour to send, there is one for which I must entreat your pardon. I mean that of which your Lordship is the subject. The best excuse I can make is, that it flowed almost spontaneously from the affectionate remembrance of a connexion that did me so much honour.

As to the rest, their merits, if they have any, and their defects, which are probably more than I am aware of, will neither of them escape your notice. But where there is much discernment, there is generally much candour; and I commit myself into your Lordship's hands with the less anxiety, being well acquainted with yours.

If my first visit, after so long an interval, should prove neither a troublesome nor a dull one, but especially if not altogether an unprofitable one, *omne tuli punctum*.

I have the honour to be, though with very different impressions of some subjects, yet with the same sentiments of affection and esteem as ever, your Lordship's faithful, and most obedient, humble servant,

W. C.

LXXXIII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

A FAST-DAY SERMON, CONTAINING SENTIMENTS RESEMBLING THOSE IN HIS OWN POEM ENTITLED "EXPOSTULATION."

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, February, 1782.

WE thank you for the Fast Sermon. I had not read two pages before I exclaimed, "The man has read *Expostulation*!" But though there is a strong resemblance between the two pieces in point of matter, and sometimes the very same expressions are to be met with, yet I soon recollected that on such a theme a striking coincidence of both might happen without a wonder. I doubt not that it is the production of an

honest man ; it carries with it an air of sincerity and zeal that is not easily counterfeited. But though I can see no reason why kings should not sometimes hear of their faults, as well as other men, I think I see many good ones why they should not be reprov'd so publicly. It can hardly be done with that respect which is due to their office, on the part of the author, or without encouraging a spirit of unmannerly censure in his readers. His Majesty, too, perhaps, might answer, " My own personal failings and offences I am ready to confess ; but were I to follow your advice, and cashier the profligate from my service, where must I seek men of faith and true Christian piety, qualified by nature and by education to succeed them ? Business must be done : men of business alone can do it ; and good men are rarely found under that description." When Nathan reprov'd David he did not employ a herald, or accompany his charge with the sound of the trumpet ; nor can I think the writer of this sermon quite justifiable in exposing the King's faults in the sight of the people.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

LXXXIV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

HOPES OF A VISIT FROM HIM—SUNDAY ROUTS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, March 7, 1782.

We have great pleasure in the contemplation of your northern journey, as it promises us a sight of you and yours by the way ; and are only sorry that Miss Shuttle-

worth cannot be of the party. A line to ascertain the hour when we may expect you, by the next preceding post, will be welcome.

What a medley are our public prints; half the page filled with the ruin of the country, and the other half filled with the vices and pleasures of it—here is an island taken, and there a new comedy—here an empire lost, and there an Italian opera, or the Duke of Gloucester's rout on a Sunday!

“May it please your Royal Highness! I am an Englishman, and must stand or fall with the nation. Religion, its true Palladium, has been stolen away, and it is crumbling into dust. Sin ruins us, the sins of the great especially; and of their sins especially the violation of the sabbath, because it is naturally productive of all the rest. If you wish well to your brother's arms, and would be glad to see the kingdom emerging from her ruins, pay more respect to an ordinance that deserves the deepest. I do not say pardon this short remonstrance. The concern I feel for my country, and the interest I have in its prosperity, give me a right to make it. I am, &c.”

Thus one might write to his Highness, and (I suppose) might be as profitably employed in whistling the tune of an old ballad.

Yours, my dear friend.

W. C.

LXXXV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.COWPER MUCH PLEASED WITH THE APPROBATION OF ALL THE
UNWINS—THE LORD CHANCELLOR THURLOW.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, March 18, 1782.

NOTHING has given me so much pleasure, since the publication of my volume, as your favourable opinion of it. It may possibly meet with acceptance from hundreds, whose commendation would afford me no other satisfaction than what I should find in the hope that it might do them good. I have some neighbours in this place who say they like it: doubtless I had rather they should than that they should not; but I know them to be persons of no more taste in poetry, than skill in the mathematics: their applause therefore is a sound that has no music in it for me. But my vanity was not so entirely quiescent when I read your friendly account of the manner it had affected *you*. It was tickled and pleased, and told me in a pretty loud whisper, that others, perhaps, of whose taste and judgment I had a high opinion, would approve it too. As a giver of good counsel I wish to please all: as an author, I am perfectly indifferent to the judgment of all, except the few who are indeed judicious. The circumstance, however, in your letter which pleased me most was, that you wrote in high spirits, and, though you said much, suppressed more, lest you should hurt my delicacy (my delicacy is obliged to you); but you observe it is not so squeamish, but that, after it has

feasted upon praise expressed, it can find a comfortable dessert in the contemplation of praise implied. I now feel as if I should be glad to begin another volume ; but from the will to the power is a step too wide for me to take at present, and the season of the year brings with it so many avocations into the garden, where I am my own *factotum*, that I have little or no leisure for the quill. I should do myself much wrong were I to omit mentioning the great complacency with which I read your narrative of Mrs. Unwin's smiles and tears : persons of much sensibility are always persons of taste ; and a taste for poetry depends, indeed, upon that very article more than upon any other. If she had Aristotle by heart, I should not esteem her judgment so highly, were she defective in point of feeling, as I do and must esteem it, knowing her to have such feelings as Aristotle could not communicate, and as half the readers in the world are destitute of. This it is that makes me set so high a price upon your mother's opinion. She is a critic by nature and not by rule, and has a perception of what is good or bad in composition, that I never knew deceive her ; insomuch that when two sorts of expression have pleaded equally for the precedence in my own esteem, and I have referred, as in such cases I always did, the decision of the point to her, I never knew her at a loss for a just one.

Whether I shall receive any answer from his Chancellorship or not is at present *in ambiguo*, and will probably continue in the same state of ambiguity much longer. He is so busy a man, and at this time, if the papers may be credited, so particularly busy, that I am forced to mortify myself with the thought, that both my book and my letter may be thrown into a corner, as

too insignificant for a statesman's notice, and never found till his executor finds them. This affair, however, is neither at my *libitum* nor his. I have sent him the truth. He that put it into the heart of a certain Eastern monarch to amuse himself, one sleepless night, with listening to the records of his kingdom, is able to give birth to such another occasion, and inspire his lordship with a curiosity to know what he has received from a friend he once loved and valued. If an answer comes, however, you shall not long be a stranger to the contents of it.

W. C.

LXXXVI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THE RECEPTION OF HIS BOOK—THE KING AND THE
CHANCELLOR.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, April 1, 1782.

I COULD not have found a better trumpeter. Your zeal to serve the interest of my volume, together with your extensive acquaintance, qualify you perfectly for that most useful office. Methinks I see you with the long tube at your mouth, proclaiming to your numerous connexions my poetical merits, and at proper intervals levelling it at Olney, and pouring into my ear the welcome sound of their approbation. I need not encourage you to proceed: your breath will never fail in such a cause; and thus encouraged, I myself, perhaps, may proceed also, and, when the versifying fit returns, produce another volume. Alas! we shall never receive

such commendations from him on the woolsack, as your good friend has lavished upon us. Whence I learn, that, however important I may be in my own eyes, I am very insignificant in his. To make me amends, however, for this mortification, Mr. Newton tells me that my book is likely to run, spread, and prosper ; that the grave cannot help smiling, and the gay are struck with the truth of it ; and that it is likely to find its way into his Majesty's hands, being put into a proper course for that purpose. Now, if the King should fall in love with my muse, and with you for her sake, such an event would make us ample amends for the Chancellor's indifference, and you might be the first divine that ever reached a mitre from the shoulders of a poet. But (I believe) we must be content, I with my gains, if I gain anything, and you with the pleasure of knowing that I am a gainer.

We laughed heartily at your answer to little John's question ; and yet I think you might have given him a direct answer—"There are various sorts of cleverness, my dear : I do not know that mine lies in the poetical way, but I can do ten times more towards the entertainment of company in the way of conversation than our friend at Olney. He can rhyme, and I can rattle. If he had my talent, or I had his, we should be too charming, and the world would almost adore us."

Yours, ever,

W. C.



MARKET HILL TREE.

LXXXVII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

REGIMENTAL MUSIC—ON PARENTHESES.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, April 27, 1782.

A PART of Lord Harrington's new-raised corps have taken up their quarters at Olney since you left us. They have the regimental music with them. The men have been drawn up this morning upon the Market

Hill; and a concert, such as we have not heard these many years, has been performed at no great distance from our window. Your mother and I both thrust our heads into the coldest east wind that ever blew in April, that we might hear them to greater advantage. The band acquitted themselves with taste and propriety; not *blaring*, like trumpeters at a fair, but producing gentle and elegant symphony, such as charmed our ears, and convinced us that no length of time can wear out a taste for harmony; and that though plays, balls, and masquerades, have lost all their power to please us, and we should find them not only insipid but insupportable, yet sweet music is sure to find a corresponding faculty in the soul; a sensibility that lives to the last, which even religion itself does not extinguish.

I remember your making an observation, when here, on the subject of parentheses, to which I acceded without limitation; but a little attention will convince us both that they are not to be universally condemned. When they abound, and when they are long, they both embarrass the sense, and are a proof that the writer's head is cloudy, that he has not properly arranged his matter, or is not well skilled in the graces of expression. But as parenthesis is ranked by grammarians among the figures of rhetoric, we may suppose they had a reason for conferring that honour upon it. Accordingly, we shall find that, in the use of some of our finest writers, as well as in the hands of the ancient poets and orators, it has a peculiar elegance, and imparts a beauty which the period would want without it.

“Hoc nemus, hunc, inquit, frondoso vertice collem
(Quis deus incertum est) habitat deus.”—VIRG. *Æn.* 8.

In this instance, the first that occurred, it is graceful. I have not time to seek for more, nor room to insert them. But your own observation, I believe, will confirm my opinion.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LXXXVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THE CRITICAL REVIEWERS—PRAISE FROM FRANKLIN—A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE—RODNEY'S VICTORY IN THE WEST INDIES.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 27, 1782.

RATHER ashamed of having been at all dejected by the censure of the Critical Reviewers, who certainly could not read without prejudice a book replete with opinions and doctrines to which they cannot subscribe, I have at present no little occasion to keep a strict guard upon my vanity, lest it should be too much flattered by the following eulogium. I send it you for the reasons I gave when I imparted to you some other anecdotes of a similar kind, while we were together. Our interests in the success of this same volume are so closely united, that you *must* share with me in the praise or blame that attends it; and sympathizing with me under the burden of injurious treatment, have a right to enjoy with me the cordials I now and then receive, as I happen to meet with more favourable and candid judges.

A merchant, a friend of ours (you will soon guess him), sent my Poems to one of the first philosophers,

one of the most eminent literary characters, as well as one of the most important in the political world, that the present age can boast of. Now, perhaps, your conjecturing faculties are puzzled, and you begin to ask, "Who, where, and what is he? speak out, for I am all impatience." I will not say a word more; the letter, in which he returns his thanks for the present, shall speak for him.¹

We may now treat the critics as the Archbishop of Toledo treated Gil Blas, when he found fault with one of his sermons. His Grace gave him a kick, and said, "Begone for a jackanapes, and furnish yourself with a better taste, if you know where to find it."

We are glad that you are safe at home again. Could we see at one glance of the eye what is passing every day upon all the roads in the kingdom, how many are terrified and hurt, how many plundered and abused, we should, indeed, find reason enough to be thankful for journeys performed in safety, and for deliverance from dangers we are not, perhaps, even permitted to see. When in some of the high southern latitudes, and in a dark tempestuous night, a flash of lightning discovered to Captain Cook a vessel, which glanced along close by his side, and which, but for the lightning, he must have run foul of, both the danger and the transient light that showed it were, undoubtedly, designed to convey to him this wholesome instruction, that a particular Providence attended him, and that he was not only preserved from evils of which he had notice, but from many more of which he had no infor-

¹ Here Cowper transcribed the letter written from Passy, by Franklin, in praise of his book. It is quoted in a subsequent letter.

mation, or even the least suspicion. What unlikely contingencies may, nevertheless, take place ! How improbable that two ships should dash against each other, in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, and that steering contrary courses, from parts of the world so immensely distant from each other, they should yet move so exactly in a line as to clash, fill, and go to the bottom, in a sea where all the ships in the world might be so dispersed as that none should see another ! Yet this must have happened, but for the remarkable interference which he has recorded. The same Providence, indeed, might as easily have conducted them so wide of each other that they should never have met at all ; but then this lesson would have been lost ; at least, the heroic voyager would have encompassed the globe without having had occasion to relate an incident that so naturally suggests it.

I am no more delighted with the season than you are. The absence of the sun, which has graced the spring with much less of his presence than he vouchsafed to the winter, has a very uncomfortable effect upon my frame. I feel an invincible aversion to employment, which I am yet constrained to fly to, as my only remedy against something worse. If I do nothing, I am dejected ; if I do anything, I am weary ; and that weariness is best described by the word lassitude, which, of all weariness in the world, is the most oppressive. But enough of myself and the weather.

The blow we have struck in the West Indies will, I suppose, be decisive at least for the present year, and, so far as that part of our possessions is concerned, in the present conflict. But the news-writers, and their correspondents, disgust me, and make me sick. One

victory, after such a long series of adverse occurrences, has filled them with self-conceit and impertinent boasting ; and while Rodney is almost accounted a Methodist, for ascribing his success to Providence, men who have renounced all dependence upon such a Friend, without whose assistance nothing can be done, threaten to drive the French out of the sea, laugh at the Spaniards, sneer at the Dutch, and are to carry the world before them. Our enemies are apt to brag, and we deride them for it ; but we can sing as loud as they can, in the same key ; and, no doubt, wherever our papers go, shall be derided in our turn. An Englishman's true glory should be, to do his business well, and say little about it ; but he disgraces himself when he puffs his prowess as if he had finished his task, when he has but just begun it.

Yours,

W. C.

LXXXIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

PROGNOSTICS AND POLITICS—MARQUIS OF ROCKINGHAM'S DEATH.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, July 16, 1782.

THOUGH some people pretend to be clever in the way of prophetic forecast, and to have a peculiar talent of sagacity, by which they can divine the meaning of a providential dispensation, while its consequences are yet in embryo, I do not. There is at this time to be found, I suppose, in the Cabinet, and in both Houses, a greater assemblage of able men, both as speakers and

counsellors, than ever were contemporary in the same land. A man not accustomed to trace the workings of Providence as recorded in Scripture, and that has given no attention to this particular subject, while employed in the study of profane history, would assert boldly that it is a token for good, that much may be expected from them, and that the country, though heavily afflicted, is not yet to be despaired of, distinguished as she is by so many characters of the highest class. Thus he would say ; and I do not deny that the event might justify his skill in prognostics. God works by means ; and in a case of great national perplexity and distress, wisdom and political ability seem to be the only natural means of deliverance. But a mind more religiously inclined, and perhaps a little tinctured with melancholy, might, with equal probability of success, hazard a conjecture directly opposite. Alas ! what is the wisdom of man, especially when he trusts in it as the only god of his confidence ? When I consider the general contempt that is poured upon all things sacred—the profusion, the dissipation, the knavish cunning of some, the rapacity of others, and the impenitence of all—I am rather inclined to fear that God, who honours himself by bringing human glory to shame, and by disappointing the expectations of those whose trust is in creatures, has signalized the present day as a day of much human sufficiency and strength, has brought together, from all quarters of the land, the most illustrious men to be found in it, only that he may prove the vanity of idols ; and that when a great empire is falling, and he has pronounced a sentence of ruin against it, the inhabitants, be they weak or strong, wise or foolish, must fall with it. I am rather confirmed in this persuasion, by observing

that these luminaries of the state had no sooner fixed themselves in the political heaven, than the fall of the brightest of them shook all the rest. The arch of their power was no sooner struck than the key-stone slipped out of its place; those that were closest in connexion with it followed, and the whole building, new as it is, seems to be already a ruin. If a man should hold this language, who could convict him of absurdity? The Marquis of Rockingham is minister; all the world rejoices, anticipating success in war and a glorious peace. The Marquis of Rockingham is dead; all the world is afflicted, and relapses into its former despondence. What does this prove, but that the Marquis was their Almighty, and that, now he is gone, they know no other? But let us wait a little; they will find another—perhaps the Duke of Portland; or perhaps the unpopular Shelburne, whom they now represent as a devil, may obtain that honour. Thus God is forgot; and, when he is, his judgments are generally his remembrancers.

I send you my last frank. Our best love attends you individually, and altogether. I give you joy of a happy change in the season, and myself also. I have filled four sides in less time than two would have cost me a week ago: such is the effect of sunshine upon such a butterfly as I am.

Yours,

W. C.

XC.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.ADVENTURE OF A KITTEN AND A VIPER—MR. BULL, MINISTER
AT NEWPORT PAGNELL—HIS ADMIRATION OF MADAME GUION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, August 3, 1782.

It is a sort of paradox, but it is true : we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure ; nor in reality more secure than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience. Passing from the greenhouse to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixed attention on something which lay on the threshold of a door nailed up. I took but little notice of them at first, but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when, behold—a viper ! the largest that I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforesaid hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and returning in a few seconds missed him : he was gone, and I feared had escaped me. Still, however, the kitten sat watching immovably on the same spot. I concluded, therefore, that, sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with

her fore foot, with her claws, however, sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophic inquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed upon him an act of decapitation, which, though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the outhouses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French poetry, composed by Madame Guion. "A quietist," say you, "and a fanatic; I will have nothing to do with her." 'Tis very well—you are welcome to have nothing to do with her; but in the meantime her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable: there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud with so much reason in the compositions of Prior. I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations, till I have filled a Lilliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which, when filled, I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer; rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his accept-

ance of it, and it now hangs over his chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and, were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

Yours,

W. C.

XCI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

JOHN GILPIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, November 4, 1782.

You are too modest; though your last consisted of three sides only, I am certainly a letter in your debt. It is possible that this present writing may prove as short; yet short as it may be, it will be a letter, and make me creditor, and you my debtor. A letter, indeed, ought not to be estimated by the length of it, but by the contents; and how can the contents of any letter be more agreeable than your last?

You tell me that "John Gilpin" made you laugh tears, and that the ladies at court are delighted with my Poems. Much good may they do them! May they become as wise as the writer wishes them, and they will be much happier than he! I know there is in the book that wisdom which cometh from above, because it was from above that I received it. May they receive it too! for whether they drink it out of the cistern, or whether it falls upon them immediately from the clouds,

as it did on me, it is all one. It is the water of life, which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more. As to the famous horseman above mentioned, he and his feats are an inexhaustible source of merriment. At least we find him so, and seldom meet without refreshing ourselves with the recollection of them. You are perfectly at liberty to deal with them as you please. *Auctore tantum anonymo imprimantur*; and when printed, send me a copy.

Yours, my dear Unwin,

W. C.

XCII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THE POOR OF OLNEY—JOHN GILPIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, November 18, 1782.

ON the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficent friend Mr. Smith. I call him ours, because having experienced his kindness to myself in a former instance, and in the present his disinterested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy; no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character. I wish, and your mother wishes it too, that he could sometimes take us in his

way to Nottingham ; he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honour to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money ; but in this town, where the gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity. The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty would be to abuse it. We promise, however, that none shall touch it but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and honest, two characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread. We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing. Thanks are due to yourself likewise, and are hereby accordingly rendered, for waiving your claim in behalf of your own parishioners. You are always with them, and they are always, at least some of them, the better for your residence among them. Olney is a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and the ragged of the earth, and it is not possible for our small party and small ability to extend their operations so far as to be much felt among such numbers. Accept therefore your share of their gratitude ; and be convinced that when they pray for a blessing upon those who relieved their wants, he that answers that prayer, when he answers it, will remember his servant at Stock.

I little thought when I was writing the history of

John Gilpin, that he would appear in print. I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laugh, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have. Well, they do not always laugh so innocently, and at so small an expense; for in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la bagatelle*; a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity: a melancholy, that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all.

I hear from Mrs. Newton, that some great persons have spoken with great approbation of a certain book. Who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a future letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the meantime have satisfied me well enough.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

XCHIL

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

HE WINDS THREAD FOR THE LADIES—MR. SMITH'S GENEROSITY
TO THE POOR OF OLNEY.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, January 19, 1783.

Not to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing. From a scene of most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement; not that our society is much multiplied—the addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's *château*. In the morning, I walk with one or other of the ladies; and in the afternoon, wind thread. Thus did Hercules and Samson, and thus do I; and were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them both. As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused.

Mr. Smith found time to do much good, and to employ us as his agents in doing it, and that might have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. Only, in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because intimate

as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I cannot yet be sure that the communication would please him, his delicacies on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend as this many a day; nor has there been an instance at any time of a few families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry by which, their debts being paid, and the parents and children comfortably clothed, they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before; but now it answers; it earns them bread, and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.

. Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

XCIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

TELLS HIM WHO WROTE "JOHN GILPIN," AND MENTIONS
FRANKLIN'S LETTER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, February 13, 1783.

IN writing to you, I never want a subject. Self is always at hand; and self, with its concerns, is always interesting to a friend.

You may think, perhaps, that having commenced poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so: I have written nothing, at least finished nothing,

since I published—except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mrs. Unwin would send to the *Public Advertiser*. Perhaps you might read it without suspecting the author.

My book procures me favours which my modesty will not permit me to specify; except one, which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress—a very handsome letter from Dr. Franklin, at Passy. These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who, according to Chaucer, was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

XCV.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

ENCLOSES FRANKLIN'S LETTER.

Olney, February 20, 1783.

SUSPECTING that I should not have hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another and a

greater; and thus it happens now, for I have no way to gratify your curiosity, but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

"SIR,

Passy, May 8, 1782.

"I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of poetry had long since left me; but there is something so new in the manner, so easy and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author.

"Your most obedient, humble servant,

"B. FRANKLIN."

XCVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

POLITICS—THE COALITION—LORD THURLOW.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

GREAT revolutions happen in this ant's nest of ours. One emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another; parties are formed, they range

themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over and are mingled together, and, like the coruscations of the northern aurora, amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward ; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernible in profile ; and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried ; yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured.

Adieu,

W. C.

XCVII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MELANCHOLY PICTURE OF HIS MIND.

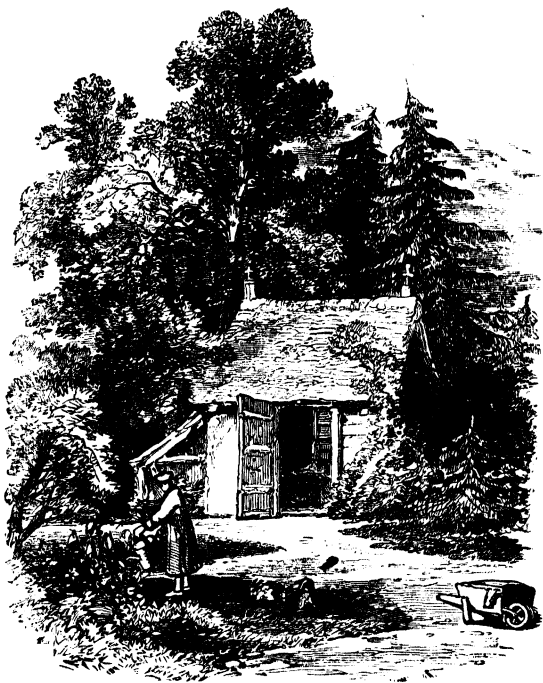
MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 12, 1788.

A LETTER written from such a place as this is a creation ; and creation is a work for which mere mortal man is very indifferently qualified. *Ex nihilo nihil fit* is a maxim that applies itself in every case where Deity is not concerned. With this view of the matter, I should charge myself with extreme folly for pretending to work without materials, did I not know that, although nothing could be the result, even that nothing will be welcome. If I can tell you no news, I can tell you at least that I esteem you highly ; that my friendship with you and yours is the only balm of my life ; a comfort, sufficient to reconcile me to an existence destitute of every other. This is not the language of to-day, only the effect of a transient cloud suddenly brought over me, and suddenly to be removed, but punctually expressive of my habitual frame of mind, such as it has been these ten years.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.



THE SUMMER-HOUSE AT OLNEY.

XCVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

HIS GREENHOUSE—MR. BULL—DESCRIPTION OF HIM.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, June 8, 1783.

OUR severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite

recess, the greenhouse. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the spot are themselves an interruption; my attention being called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport; perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it,—an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party. At other times, he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one; and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either: it can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection.

Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco.
Nothing is perfect :

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum.

On the other side I send you a something—a song,
if you please—composed last Thursday : the incident
happened the day before.¹

Yours,

W. C.

XCIX.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

WISHES NEWTON HAD CONTINUED HIS ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY
—THE DAY OF JUDGMENT—THE REMARKABLE ATMOSPHERIC
PHENOMENA OF SUMMER 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 13, 1783.

I THANK you for your Dutch communications. The
suffrage of such respectable men must have given you
much pleasure—a pleasure only to be exceeded by
the consciousness you had before of having pub-
lished truth, and of having served a good master by
doing so.

I have always regretted that your ecclesiastical history
went no farther : I never saw a work that I thought
more likely to serve the cause of truth, nor history

¹ Here followed his song of the Rosa.

applied to so good a purpose. The facts incontestable, the grand observations upon them all irrefragable, and the style, in my judgment, incomparably better than that of Robertson or Gibbon. I would give you my reasons for thinking so, if I had not a very urgent one for declining it. You have no ear for such music, whoever may be the performer. What you added, but never printed, is quite equal to what has appeared, which I think might have encouraged you to proceed, though you missed that freedom in writing which you found before. While you were at Olney, this was at least possible: in a state of retirement, you had leisure, without which, I suppose, Paul himself could not have written his Epistles. But those days are fled, and every hope of a continuation is fled with them.

The day of judgment is spoken of not only as a surprise, but a snare—a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A difference, indeed, will obtain in favour of the godly; which is, that though a snare, a sudden, in some sense an unexpected, and in every sense an awful event, yet it will find *them* prepared to meet it. But the day being thus characterized, a wide field is consequently open to conjecture; some will look for it at one period, and some at another. We shall most of us prove, at last, to have been mistaken; and if any should prove to have guessed aright, they will reap no advantage, the felicity of their conjecture being incapable of proof, till the day itself shall prove it. My own sentiments upon the subject appear to me perfectly Scriptural, though I have no doubt that they differ totally from those of all who have ever thought about it; being, however, so singular, and of no importance to the happiness of mankind, and being, moreover, difficult to

swallow, just in proportion as they are peculiar, I keep them to myself.

I am, and always have been, a great observer of natural appearances, but I think not a superstitious one. The fallibility of those speculations, which lead men of fanciful minds to interpret Scripture by the contingencies of the day, is evident from this consideration, that what the God of the Scriptures has seen fit to conceal, he will not, as the God of Nature, publish. He is one and the same in both capacities, and consistent with himself; and his purpose, if he designs a secret, impenetrable in whatever way we attempt to open it. It is impossible, however, for an observer of natural phenomena not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last still continue, though, till yesterday, the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it. The sun continues to rise and set without his rays, and hardly shines at noon, even in a cloudless day. At eleven last night, the moon was a dull red: she was nearly at her highest elevation, and had the colour of heated brick. She would naturally, I know, have such an appearance looking through a misty atmosphere; but that such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time in a country where it has not happened, in my remembrance, even in the winter, is rather remarkable. We have had more thunder-storms than have consisted well with the peace of the fearful maidens in Olney, though not so many as have happened in places at no great distance, nor so violent. Yesterday morning, however, at seven o'clock, two fire-balls burst either in the steeple or close to it. William Andrews saw them meet at that point, and immediately after saw such a smoke issue

from the apertures in the steeple, as soon rendered it invisible. The noise of the explosion surpassed all the noises I ever heard ; you would have thought that a thousand sledge-hammers were battering great stones to powder, all in the same instant. The weather is still as hot, and the air as full of vapour, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer.

There was once a periodical paper published, called "Mist's Journal"—a name well adapted to the sheet before you. Misty, however, as I am, I do not mean to be mystical, but to be understood, like an almanack-maker, according to the letter. As a poet, nevertheless, I claim, if any wonderful event should follow, a right to apply all and every such post-prognostic to the purposes of the tragic muse.

Yours,

W. C.

C.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

HIS PASSION FOR RETIREMENT—HIS OPINION OF ROBERTSON
AND GIBBON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, July 27, 1783.

You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me, than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon which many grave, and perhaps some profitable obser-

vations might be made ; but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative and the reflection it might suggest are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, what did it produce ? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both—nothing !—A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world, as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted. My passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased ; a circumstance I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know, that we think as we are made to think ; and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chooses for us. Thus I am both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me ; I am not shut up in the Bastille ; there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key ; but an invisible, uncontrollable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt, even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison-walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness of those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The

same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded that were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelvemonth, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects which to all the world besides would be at least indifferent; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it.

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always; Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manner. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much

propriety, but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say ; which, as history is a thing to be said and not sung, is, in my judgment, very much to your advantage. A writer that despises their tricks, and is yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves himself, by that single circumstance, a man of superior judgment and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense, and a desire of doing good, are the predominant features ; but affectation is an emetic.

W. C.

OL.

To the REV. WILLIAM BULL.

HIS GREENHOUSE—"THE SOFA."

Olney, August 3, 1783.

YOUR sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces which you have seen, we have not envied you ; but are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man ? Is not our greenhouse a cabinet of perfumes ? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignonette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian—a wilderness of sweets. "The Sofa" is ended, but not finished ; a paradox, which

your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a moment. Do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it; on the contrary I find it severe exercise, to mould and fashion it to my mind.

CII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DOUBTFUL AS TO THE SUCCESS OF HIS PRODUCTION—ON
BALLADS—HIS TWO GOLDFINCHES.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, August 4, 1783.

I FEEL myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the inquiry you propose. But I am pretty well prepared for the worst, and so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favour, and am thereby convinced that I have neither disgraced myself nor my subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim with success at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing upon Scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a poet to entertain, in days like these. Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly, and be not mortified even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin; for it is no more

than we have reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times, and we will acquit the poet.

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge, as much as I was myself. The tune laid me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines ; which I suppose would suit no ear but a French one ; neither did I intend anything more than that the subject and the words should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry, I believe, peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it ; but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the *What d'ye call it ?*—" 'Twas when the seas were roaring " ? I have been well informed that they all contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows this country ever saw did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success, however, answered their wishes. The

ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing, in my judgment, all that Ovid or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more touching and pathetic than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads, and ballad writers. "A worthy subject," you will say, "for a man whose head might be filled with better things;" and it *is* filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose, that I thrust into it all manner of topics that may prove more amusing; as, for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the greenhouse. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall: the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and on my return was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him, and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but casting my eye upon the other cage perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape it afforded him, than to salute his friend, and to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon

his neighbour's cage, kissing him, as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship as, for the sake of its gratification, had twice declined an opportunity to be free; and, consenting to their union, resolved that for the future one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents; for at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.

I transcribe for you a piece of Madame Guion, not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them.

Yours ever,

W. C.

CIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD—MADAME GUION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, September 7, 1783.

So long a silence needs an apology. I have been hindered by a three weeks' visit from our Hoxton friends, and by a cold and feverish complaint, which are but just removed.

The French poetess is certainly chargeable with the fault you mention, though I thought it not so glaring in the piece I sent you. I have endeavoured, indeed, in all the translations I have made, to cure her of that evil, either by suppression of passages exceptionable

upon that account, or by a more sober and respectful manner of expression. Still, however, she will be found to have conversed familiarly with God, but I hope not fulsomely, nor so as to give reasonable disgust to a religious reader. That God should deal familiarly with man, or, which is the same thing, that he should permit man to deal familiarly with him, seems not very difficult to conceive, or presumptuous to suppose, when some things are taken into consideration. Woe to the sinner that shall dare to take a liberty with him that is not warranted by his word, or to which he himself has not encouraged him ! When he assumed man's nature, he revealed himself as the Friend of man, as the brother of every soul that loves him. He conversed freely with man while he was on earth, and as freely with him after his resurrection. I doubt not, therefore, that it is possible to enjoy an access to him even now, unencumbered with ceremonious awe, easy, delightful, and without constraint. This, however, can only be the lot of those who make it the business of their lives to please him, and to cultivate communion with him ; and then, I presume, there can be no danger of offence, because such a habit of the soul is of his own creation ; and near as we come, we come no nearer to him than he is pleased to draw us. If we address him as children, it is because he tells us he is our Father ; if we unbosom ourselves to him as to a friend, it is because he calls us friends ; and if we speak to him in the language of love, it is because he first used it, thereby teaching us that it is the language he delights to hear from his people. But I confess that, through the weakness, the folly, and corruption of human nature, this privilege, like all other Christian privileges, is liable to abuse.

There is a mixture of evil in everything we do ; indulgence encourages us to encroach, and while we exercise the rights of children, we become childish. Here, I think, is the point in which my authoress failed, and here it is that I have particularly guarded my translation ; not afraid of representing her as dealing with God familiarly, but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is somewhat guilty. A wonderful fault for such a woman to fall into, who spent her life in the contemplation of his glory, who seems to have been always impressed with a sense of it, and sometimes quite absorbed by the views she had of it.

W. C.

CIV.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

THE DELIRIUM OF FEVER—SCOTT THE COMMENTATOR—BACON
THE SCULPTOR.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, September 8, 1783.

MRS. UNWIN would have answered your kind note from Bedford had not a pain in her side prevented her. I, who am her secretary upon such occasions, should certainly have answered it for her, but was hindered by illness, having been myself seized with a fever immediately after your departure. The account of your recovery gave us great pleasure, and I am persuaded that you will feel yourself repaid by the information that I give you of mine. The reveries your head was filled with while your disorder was most prevalent, though

they were but reveries, and the offspring of a heated imagination, afforded you yet a comfortable evidence of the predominant bias of your heart and mind to the best subjects. I had none such; indeed I was in no degree delirious, nor has anything less than a fever really dangerous ever made me so. In this respect, if in no other, I may be said to have a strong head; and perhaps for the same reason that wine would never make me drunk, an ordinary degree of fever has no effect upon my understanding. The epidemic begins to be more mortal as the autumn comes on; and in Bedfordshire it is reported, how truly I cannot say, to be nearly as fatal as the plague. I heard lately of a clerk in a public office, whose chief employment it was for many years to administer oaths, who, being light-headed in a fever of which he died, spent the last week of his life in crying day and night: "So help you God—kiss the book—give me a shilling." What a wretch in comparison with you!

Mr. Scott has been ill almost ever since you left us; and last Saturday, as on many foregoing Saturdays, was obliged to clap on a blister by way of preparation for his Sunday labours. He cannot draw breath upon any other terms. If holy orders were always conferred upon such conditions, I question but even bishoprics themselves would want an occupant. But he is easy and cheerful.

I beg you will mention me kindly to Mr. Bacon,¹ and make him sensible, that if I did not write the paragraph he wished for, it was not owing to any want of respect for the desire he expressed, but to mere inability. If in a state of mind that almost disqualifies

¹ The Sculptor.

me for society, I could possibly wish to form a new connexion, I should wish to know him ; but I never shall, and things being as they are, I do not regret it. You are my old friend, therefore I do not spare you ; having known you in better days, I make you pay for any pleasure I might then afford you by a communication of my present pains ; but I have no claims of this sort upon Mr. Bacon.

Be pleased to remember us both with much affection to Mrs. Newton, and to her and your Eliza ; to Miss Catlett likewise, if she is with you. Poor Eliza droops and languishes ; but in the land to which she is going she will hold up her head and droop no more. A sickness that leads the way to everlasting life, is better than the health of an antediluvian. Accept our united love.

My dear friend,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

Lady Austen desires me to add her compliments.

CV.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

RECOVERY FROM FEVER—GOOD MR. BULL, AND HIS GARDEN
CONTRIVED FOR THE GROWTH OF MELANCHOLY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, September 23, 1783.

WE are glad that having been attacked by a fever, which has often proved fatal, and almost always leaves

the sufferer debilitated to the last degree, you find yourself so soon restored to health, and your strength recovered. *Your* health and strength are useful to others, and in that view important in *his* account who dispenses both, and by your means a more precious gift than either. For my own part, though I have not been laid up, I have never been perfectly well since you left us. A smart fever, which lasted indeed but a few hours, succeeded by lassitude and want of spirits that seemed still to indicate a feverish habit, has made for some time, and still makes me, very unfit for my favourite occupations—writing and reading; so that even a letter, and even a letter to you, is not without its burden.

John Lire has had the epidemic, and has it still, but grows better. When he was first seized with it, he gave notice that he should die; but in this only instance of prophetic exertion he seems to have been mistaken; he has, however, been very near it. I should have told you that poor John has been very ready to depart, and much comforted through his whole illness. He, you know, though a silent, has been a very steady professor. He indeed fights battles, and gains victories, but makes no noise. Europe is not astonished at his feats; foreign academies do not seek him for a member. He will never discover the art of flying, or send a globe of taffeta up to heaven. But he will go thither himself.

Since you went, we dined with Mr. Bull. I had sent him notice of our visit a week before, which, like a contemplative, studious man, as he is, he put in his pocket and forgot. When we arrived, the parlour windows were shut, and the house had the appearance

of being uninhabited. After waiting some time, however, the maid opened the door, and the master presented himself. It is hardly worth while to observe so repeatedly that his garden seems a spot contrived only for the growth of melancholy; but being always affected by it in the same way, I cannot help it. He showed me a nook, in which he had placed a bench, and where he said he found it very refreshing to smoke his pipe and meditate. Here he sits, with his back against one brick wall, and his nose against another, which must, you know, be very refreshing, and greatly assist meditation. He rejoices the more in this niche, because it is an acquisition made at some expense, and with no small labour; several loads of earth were removed in order to make it; which loads of earth, had I the management of them, I should carry thither again, and fill up a place more fit in appearance to be a repository for the dead than the living. I would on no account put any man out of conceit with his innocent enjoyments, and therefore never tell him my thoughts upon this subject; but he is not seldom low-spirited, and I cannot but suspect that his situation helps to make him so.

I shall be obliged to you for Hawkesworth's "Voyages," when it can be sent conveniently. The long evenings are beginning, and nothing shortens them so effectually as reading aloud.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CVI.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MELANCHOLY EFFECTS OF THE PERVERSION OF CHRISTIANITY
—CAPTIVATED WITH HAWKESWORTH'S "VOYAGES."

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, October 6, 1783.

IT is, indeed, a melancholy consideration, that the gospel, whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind in the present, as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its Author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should, through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes the tools of popes, have produced incidentally so much mischief; only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from heaven, to publish peace between man and his Maker; the Prince of peace himself comes to confirm and establish it; and war, hatred, and desolation are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book, which none of them understand. He that is slain, dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him; and he that slew him, is equally convinced that he has done God service. In reality, they are both mistaken, and

equally unentitled to the honour they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should set out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road till a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be that none of them would ever reach it; and such a fray, preposterous and shocking in the extreme, would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world thus occupied at present? Even because they have exchanged a zeal that was no better than madness, for an indifference equally pitiable and absurd. The holy sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations called Christian, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because he that was buried in it is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy, has cured them, indeed, of the misery of an abused understanding; but together with the delusion they have lost the substance, and, for the sake of the lies that were grafted upon it, have quarrelled with the truth itself. Here, then, we see the *ne plus ultra* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to non-essentials; but, with respect to that in which the essence of Christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that, in different ages, have disgraced the faith; but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted shall be known hereafter. One thing in the meantime is certain, that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples of the gospel have been more dan-

gerous to its interests than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries ; and perhaps for this cause these mischiefs might be suffered to prevail for a season, that its Divine original and nature might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it was able to stand its ground for ages against the most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The outrages that have followed this perversion of the truth have proved, indeed, a stumbling-block to individuals ; the wise of this world, with all their wisdom, have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and abuse of it. Voltaire was offended, and Gibbon has turned his back ; but the flock of Christ is still nourished, and still increases, notwithstanding the unbelief of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone, and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the "Voyages," which I received, and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor ; my mainsail is rent into shreds ; I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian, and all this without moving from the fireside. The principal fruits of these circuits that have been made around the globe, seem likely to be the amusement of those that stayed at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly satisfy the expense of such undertakings. We brought away an Indian, and having debauched him, we sent him home again to communicate the infection to his country—fine sport, to be sure, but such as will not defray the cost. Nations that live upon bread-fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our

acquaintance, will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them : their poverty is, indeed, their mercy.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CVII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST SEPARATION OF AMERICA FROM
BRITAIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, October, 1783.

I AM much obliged to you for your American anecdotes, and feel the obligation, perhaps, more sensibly, the labour of transcribing being in particular that to which I myself have the greatest aversion. The Loyalists are much to be pitied : driven from all the comforts that depend upon and are intimately connected with a residence in their native land, and sent to cultivate a distant one, without the means of doing it ; abandoned, too, through a deplorable necessity, by the government to which they have sacrificed all, they exhibit a spectacle of distress which one cannot view, even at this distance, without participating in what they feel. Why could not some of our useless wastes and forests have been allotted to their support ? To have built them houses, indeed, and furnished them with implements of husbandry, would have put us to no small expense ; but I suppose the increase of population and the im-

provement of the soil would soon have been felt as a national advantage, and have indemnified the state, if not enriched it. We are bountiful to foreigners, and neglect those of our own household. I remember that, compassionating the miseries of the Portuguese, at the time of the Lisbon earthquake, we sent them a ship-load of tools to clear away the rubbish with, and to assist them in rebuilding the city. I remember, too, it was reported at the time that the court of Portugal accepted our wheelbarrows and spades with a very ill grace, and treated our bounty with contempt. An act like this in behalf of our brethren, carried only a little further, might possibly have redeemed them from ruin, have resulted in emolument to ourselves, have been received with joy, and repaid with gratitude. Such are my speculations upon the subject, who, not being a politician by profession, and very seldom giving my attention for a moment to such a matter, may not be aware of difficulties and objections which they of the Cabinet can discern with half an eye. Perhaps to have taken under our protection a race of men proscribed by the Congress, might be thought dangerous to the interests we hope to have hereafter in their high and mighty regards and affections. It is ever the way of those who rule the earth, to leave out of their reckoning Him who rules the universe. They forget that the poor have a Friend more powerful to avenge than they can be to oppress, and that treachery and perfidy must therefore prove bad policy in the end. The Americans themselves appear to me to be in a situation little less pitiable than that of the deserted Loyalists. Their fears of arbitrary imposition were certainly well founded. A struggle, therefore, might be necessary in order to

prevent it, and this end might surely have been answered without a renunciation of dependence. But the passions of a whole people, once put in motion, are not soon quieted. Contest begets aversion, a little success inspires more ambitious hopes, and thus a slight quarrel terminates, at last, in a breach never to be healed, and perhaps in the ruin of both parties. It does not seem likely that a country so distinguished by the Creator, with everything that can make it desirable, should be given up to desolation for ever; and they may possibly have reason on their side, who suppose that, in time, it will have the pre-eminence over all others: but the day of such prosperity seems far distant; Omnipotence, indeed, can hasten it, and it may dawn when it is least expected. But we govern ourselves in all our reasonings by present appearances. Persons at least no better informed than myself are constrained to do so.

I intended to have taken another subject when I began, and I wish I had. No man living is less qualified to settle nations than I am; but when I write to you, I talk, that is, I write, as fast as my pen can run, and on this occasion it ran away with me. I acknowledge myself in your debt for your last favour, but cannot pay you now, unless you will accept as payment, what I know you value more than all I can say besides, the most unfeigned assurances of my affection for you and yours.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

CVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

VEXED AT THE NEGLECT OF THURLOW AND COLMAN—
DISSUADES FROM A SEDENTARY LIFE—BALLOONS.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, November 10, 1783.

I HAVE lost, and wasted, almost all my writing-time in making an alteration in the verses I either inclose or subjoin, for I know not which will be the case at present. If prose comes readily, I shall transcribe them on another sheet; otherwise, on this. You will understand, before you have read many of them, that they are not for the press; I lay you under no other injunctions. The unkind behaviour of our acquaintance, though it is possible that, in some instances, it may not much affect our happiness, nor engage many of our thoughts, will sometimes obtrude itself upon us with a degree of importunity not easily resisted; and then, perhaps, though almost insensible of it before, we feel more than the occasion will justify. In such a moment it was that I conceived this poem, and gave loose to a degree of resentment which, perhaps, I ought not to have indulged, but which in a cooler hour I cannot altogether condemn. My former intimacy with the two characters was such, that I could not but feel myself provoked by the neglect with which they both treated me on a late occasion. So much by way of preface.

You ought not to have supposed that if you had visited us last summer, the pleasure of the interview would have been all your own. By such an imagination, you wrong both yourself and us. Do you suppose we do not love you? You cannot suspect your mother of coldness; and as to me, assure yourself I have no friend in the world with whom I communicate without the least reserve, yourself excepted. Take heart, then; and when you find a favourable opportunity to come, assure yourself of such a welcome from us both as you have a right to look for. But I have observed in your two last letters somewhat of a dejection and melancholy, that I am afraid you do not sufficiently strive against.

I suspect you of being too sedentary. "You cannot walk." Why you cannot is best known to yourself. I am sure your legs are long enough, and your person does not overload them. But I beseech you ride, and ride often. I think I have heard you say, you cannot even do that without an object. Is not health an object? Is not a new prospect, which in most countries is gained at the end of every mile, an object? Assure yourself that easy-chairs are no friends to cheerfulness, and that a long winter, spent by the fireside, is a prelude to an unhealthy spring. Everything I see in the fields is to me an object; and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree, every day of my life with a new pleasure. This, indeed, is partly the effect of a natural taste for rural beauty, and partly the effect of habit; for I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air, and conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it. I earnestly recommend a cultivation of the same taste to

you, suspecting that you have neglected it, and suffer for doing so.

The balloons prosper: I congratulate you upon it. Thanks to Montgolfier, we shall fly at last.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

A BALLOON—INTRODUCTION TO THE THROCKMORTONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

• Olney, December, 1783.

BALLOONS are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor is a young man whom I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure-grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it by the favour

of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civilest terms, in which he told me that the next day he should attempt to fill a balloon, and, if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe, very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it very precarious. Our reception was, however, flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us than we could possibly have expected ; indeed rather more than any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree that I thought would shelter us both—a large elm, in a grove that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and running towards us in the rain insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it in a manner that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one. A few days afterwards, in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going towards the house, and exchanged bows and curtseys at a little distance,

but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into the adjoining field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the courtyard ring, and saw Mr. T. advancing hastily toward us ; we made equal haste to meet him. He presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed a singular favour, and after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less, than that all this civility and attention was designed, on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance ; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call now and then, and to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way, neither our house, furniture, servants, or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments ; neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry. Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have told you a long story. Farewell. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

CX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THOUGHTS ON THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, January 3, 1784.

Know that I have learnt long since of Abbé Raynal to hate all monopolies, as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large ; consequently, the charter in question would not, at any rate, be a favourite of mine. This, however, is of itself, I confess, no sufficient reason to justify the resumption of it ; but such reasons I think are not wanting. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the non-performance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited if those conditions are exceeded, if the design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were never in the contemplation of the donor ? This appears to me to be no misrepresentation of their case whose charter is supposed to be in danger. It constitutes them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East Indies ; but it does no more. It invests them with no sovereignty ; it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the King cannot alienate if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised ; and, forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should even have a right, unless such a one as it is a

disgrace to plead—a right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel as often as they please; making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance that I have ever heard consulting their interest or advantage. That Government, therefore, is bound to interfere, and to unking these tyrants, is to me self-evident. And if, having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding on the legislature to resume it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one, must follow the neglect of it. But suppose this were done, can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance; never was charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such a measure should be drawn into a precedent, unless it could be alleged as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the governors of the Bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the meantime, I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy, because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours, affectionately,

W. C.

CXI.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MR. FOX'S EAST INDIA BILL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, January 25, 1784.

THIS contention about East Indian patronage seems not unlikely to avenge upon us, by its consequences, the mischiefs we have done there. The matter in dispute is too precious to be relinquished by either party ; and each is jealous of the influence the other would derive from the possession of it. In a country whose politics have so long rolled upon the wheels of corruption, an affair of such value must prove a weight in either scale absolutely destructive of the very idea of a balance. Every man has his sentiments upon this subject, and I have mine. Were I constituted umpire of this strife, with full powers to decide it, I would tie a talent of lead about the neck of this patronage, and plunge it into the depths of the sea. To speak less figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils or the most insupportable tyranny at home : that sort of tyranny, I mean, which flatters and tantalizes the subject with a show of freedom, and in reality allows him nothing more ; bribing to the right and left ; rich enough to afford the purchase of a thousand consciences, and consequently strong enough, if it happen to meet with an incorruptible one, to render

all the efforts of that man, or of twenty such men, if they could be found, romantic, and of no effect. I am the King's most loyal subject, and most obedient humble servant. But, by his Majesty's leave, I must acknowledge I am not altogether convinced of the rectitude even of his own measures, or the simplicity of his views; and if I were satisfied that he himself is to be trusted, it is, nevertheless, palpable that he cannot answer for his successors. At the same time, he is my king, and I reverence him as such. I account his prerogative sacred, and shall never wish prosperity to a party that invades it; and, under that pretence of patriotism, would annihilate all the consequence of a character essential to the very being of the constitution. For these reasons, I am sorry that we have any dominion in the East—that we have any such emoluments to contend about. Their immense value will probably prolong the dispute; and such struggles having been already made in the conduct of it as have shaken our very foundations, it seems not unreasonable to suppose, that still greater efforts, and more fatal, are behind; and, after all, the decision in favour of either side may be ruinous to the whole. In the meantime, that the Company themselves are but indifferently qualified for the kingship, is most deplorably evident. What shall I say, therefore? I distrust the court—I suspect the patriots—I put the Company entirely aside, as having forfeited all claim to confidence in such a business; and see no remedy, of course, but in the annihilation, if that could be accomplished, of the very existence of our authority in the East Indies.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MISERIES OF NERVOUS PEOPLE—HOW UNLIKE THEY ARE TO
THE PICTS—HIS DREAM THAT HE SAW ADAM.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, February 10, 1784.

THE morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits : so much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert ; and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us whom they call *nervous*. By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is regularly wound up ; it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of punctuating ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear abroad. But, on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery ; but phy-

sicians, I presume, they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible that a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without clothing, would defy the severest season; and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold: a cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would, perhaps, have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case; but they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference, however, that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices and enfeebling self-indulgences of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self. A man, indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me—a man who sighs and groans, who wears out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never thinks of the aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their

hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him ; a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly characterized, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward, indeed, in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect or to turn out his toes, to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning ; but if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock ; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution ; and who, being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis, therefore, there has been a gradual declension in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me ; at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXIII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

A THAW—RELIEF TO THE POOR OF OLNEY—POLITICS—COWPER
A FOXITE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, February 21, 1784.

I GIVE you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks' continuance, with very little interruption; the longest that has happened since the year 1739. May I presume that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelligence, which, perhaps, no other of your correspondents will vouchsafe to communicate, though they are as well apprised of it, and as much convinced of the truth of it, as myself? It is, I suppose, everywhere felt as a blessing, but nowhere more sensibly than at Olney; though even at Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of many. The same benefactor who befriended them last year, has, with equal liberality, administered a supply to their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous flue that warms my myrtles, he does good, and is unseen. His injunctions of secrecy are still as rigorous as ever, and must, therefore, be observed with the same attention. He, however, is a happy man, whose philanthropy is not like mine, an impotent principle, spending itself in fruitless wishes. At the same time, I confess it is a consolation, and I feel it an honour, to be employed as the conductor and to be trusted as the dispenser of another man's bounty. Some have been saved from perishing, and all, that could partake of it, from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the newspapers. I take it for granted, that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should, indeed, have a better opinion of my documents. But if the House of Commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information, inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified, I take courage ; and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, I am not altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and that Lord North is a villain ; that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Villain and rascal are appellations which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct ; and the rather, because I feel myself much inclined to believe that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think that secret influence is a bugbear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose—the mere *shibboleth* of a party. Stuartism, in my mind, has been the characteristic of the

present reign ; and being, and having always been, somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty, I am not able to withhold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it. The son of Lord Chatham seems to me to have abandoned his father's principles. I admire neither his measures nor his temper.

Remember us as those that love you, and are never unmindful of you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXIV.

To the REV. WILLIAM BULL.

PROGRESS OF "THE SOFA"—HIS POLITICS.

MY DEAR SIR,

Olney, February 22, 1784.

I CONGRATULATE you on the thaw : I suppose it is a universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable. What reason, therefore, have they to rejoice, who, being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour ! The ice in my ink, however, is not yet dissolved. It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it prevailed. The "Sofa" has, consequently, received little or no addition since. It consists at present of four books, and part of a fifth. When the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished ; but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance.

Are you not afraid, Tory as you are, to avow your principles to me, who am a Whig? Know that I am in the opposition; that though I pity the King, I do not wish him success in the present contest.

Yours,

W. C.

CXV.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

NEWTON'S "APOLOGIA," OR VINDICATION OF HIMSELF FOR BEING
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND—EAST INDIA PATRONAGE.

Olney, March 11, 1784.

I RETURN you many thanks for your Apology, which I have read with great pleasure. You know of old that your style always pleases me; and having in a former letter given you the reasons for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit, too, in which you write, pleases me as much. But I perceive that in some cases it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good-tempered; in all cases, I suppose, where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions, truth itself seems a satire, because by implication at least it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason, perhaps, you will find that you have made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert, and to prove, that an

enlightened minister of the gospel may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety, continue in the Establishment, and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of some Dissenting doctors ; and to nettle them still the more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity of being silent, by declaring that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole, however, I have no doubt that your Apology will do good. If it should irritate some who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them, that there may be grace, truth, and efficacy in the ministry of a church of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention to which, both from the nature of the subject, and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

The patronage of the East Indies will be a dangerous weapon in whatever hands. I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same that I have of a possibility that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our Western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favour on the opposite side ; in which case we shall be poor, but I think we shall stand a better chance to be free : and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast and be no man's slave, than wear a chain and drink tea as usual. I have just room to add, that we love you as usual, and are your very affectionate William and Mary.

W. C.

CXVI.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.AN ELECTIONEERING VISIT—BEHAVIOUR OF THE CANDIDATE—
MR. SCOTT'S PREACHING.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, March 29, 1784.

IT being his Majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window ; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys hallooed, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss¹ was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at

¹ His tame hare.

his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing towards me, shook me by the hand, with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe; and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner,¹ addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a riband from his buttonhole. The boys hallooed, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, with-

¹ A shopkeeper at Olney.

drew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never, probably, to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued ; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in the world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service ; and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever, indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended : but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

W. C.

CXVII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

THE SCRIPTURE AN EXHIBITION OF MERCY—EARTHQUAKE IN
CALABRIA—USELESSNESS OF THE POPE'S DISPENSATIONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, April, 1784.

PEOPLE that are but little acquainted with the terrors of Divine wrath are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker; but for my own part, I would sooner take Empedocles' leap, and fling myself into Mount *Ætna*, than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the Scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy; it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set forth that measure of it only, which may be endured even in this life, the Christian world, perhaps, would have been less comfortable; but I believe presumptuous meddlers with the gospel would have been less frequently met with. The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find that he has burnt them.

What havoc in Calabria! Every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God, or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other; but with reference to the Divine power they are equally fixed or equally unstable. The inhabitants of

a rock shall sink, while a cock-boat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the carnival; but it seems they are as offensive to Him whose vicegerent he pretends himself at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence for this time forth for ever. There is a word that makes this world tremble, and the Pope cannot countermand it. A fig for such a conjurer! Pharaoh's conjurers had twice his ability.

Believe me, my dear friend, affectionately yours,

W. C.

OXVIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

BEATTIE AND BLAIR.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, April 5, 1784.

I THANKED you in my last for Johnson; I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease, too, that his own character appears in every page; and, which is very rare, we see not only the writer, but the man; and that man so gentle, so well-tempered, so happy in his religion,

and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him, if one has the least sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the "Minstrel," and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie.

I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Doctor Blair has such a brain as Shakespeare somewhere describes, as "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

REMARKS ON BLAIR'S CRITICISM OF A PASSAGE IN VIRGIL.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney. April 25, 1784.

I WISH I had both burning words and bright thoughts; but I have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day,

and having already written a long letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order, therefore, to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give you as much as I can spare of the present evening.

Since I despatched my last, Blair has crept a little further into my favour. As his subjects improve, he improves with them; but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as with so much knowledge it is possible to be. His language is (except Swift's), the least figurative I remember to have seen; and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author than really tastes them; and who finds that a passage is praiseworthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more largely had I read the books to myself; but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well, therefore, note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunderstorm in the first *Georgic* which ends with

Ingeminant austri et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and consequently most striking. He therefore admires the effects of the thunderbolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment; but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression; and in the instance in question, I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is only such as the word *ingeminant* could describe; and the words *densissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far, therefore, from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the *Æneid* contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXX.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

SUCCESS OF THE "APOLOGIA"—AN ELECTION RIOT AT OLNEY.

Olney, April 26, 1784.

WE are glad that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but your accession to their party ; but the liberal will say you do well, and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested.

The candidates for this county have set an example of economy which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble ; a reform, however, which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled ; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant, a rioter, dressed in a merry-

andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. Ashburner was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him; he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his skull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it; and in five minutes, twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend,

We love you, and are yours,

W. & M.

CXXI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON FACE-PAINTING.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 3, 1784.

THE subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and, secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any farther than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession, of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than if it were blue or green; and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally brown or yellow, with very few exceptions; and, secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint: for they do not, as I am satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England (I am afraid) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? This was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious till she attained an age that made the supposition of

their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature has made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our countrywomen. That they are guilty of a design to deceive is certain ; otherwise why so much art ? and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose ? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind ; or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here, therefore, my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character ; and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so ; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic ; and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled, were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more ; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others ; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case,

however, can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here ; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot (at least they hardly can) give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one commonly uses both. Now, all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they may be called, are mercurial ; consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned was a miserable witness of the truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady Coventry was hardly a less melancholy proof of it ; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons I utterly condemn the practice as it obtains in England ; and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words ; but that anxious solicitude about the person which such an artifice evidently betrays, is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth and not on

things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art; for in the use of French women I think it is as innocent as in the use of the wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive vaeque.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXXII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

"JOHN GILPIN" NOT TO BE A PART OF THE VOLUME CONTAINING
"THE TASK"—THE EVILS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS—"TIROCINIUM"
MEANT TO EXPOSE THEM.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 8, 1784.

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own: for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of "John Gilpin," recommended to me, by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel; but having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have

fallen below themselves when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of "The Task," I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content, therefore, with having laughed and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success as a poet upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to an end of "The Task," and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man; and, on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken if "Tirocinium" do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination; and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an

author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you.

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your mother's remembrances,

W. C.

CXXIII.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MR. PITT'S NEW TAXES.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, July 5, 1784.

A DEARTH of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part, and must be, uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present, and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying anything, whether it be sense or nonsense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum, if, after advertising a month in the *Gazette*, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him or his measures so little as I do.

When I say that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood that I would forfeit such a sum if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him ; but at the best, I fear that he will have to say at last with *Æneas*,

Si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiam hæc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes ; at least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says, indeed, that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated, it seems to amount to this, " Make the necessities of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax ; and if they buy none, the tax as to them will be annihilated." True ; but in the meantime they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but little the richer when the hours in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end ; but I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrum.

Yours, affectionately,

W. C.

CXXIV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DAILY VISITS TO WESTON—THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, August 14, 1784.

I GIVE you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured skulls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road; thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security. Having, no doubt, their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure, they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no farther. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you, that our neighbours in that place being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence, to consider the garden and all its contents as our own, and to gather whatever we liked without the least scruple.

We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honeysuckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific Ocean. In our last night's lecture, we made our acquaintance with the island of Hapae, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way ; and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled, by savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this, however, have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion they might even be our masters ! How wonderful, too, that with a tub and a stick, they should be able to produce such harmony as persons accustomed to the sweetest music cannot but hear with pleasure ! Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands ? Many of them are near neighbours to each other, and their opportunities of improvement much the same ; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance ; while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation, and often entertain me, even while I am not employed in reading them.

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to write, an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

Heu quot amatores nunc torquet epistola rara !
Vectigal certum, perituraque gratia FRANKI !

Yours, faithfully,

W. C.

CXXV.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

A VISIT FROM MR. VENN, WHO IS PLEASED WITH HIS POETRY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, September 11, 1784.

ABOUT a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. Venn, whom I had not seen for many years. He introduced himself to me very politely ; with many thanks on his own part and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well-being, but gave him no hint of this last production. He said that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in "Table Talk." He seemed, indeed, to emit some sparks when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never

heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it is a most innocent one, and partakes not in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what He freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Yours,

W. C.

CXXVI.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

ON THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN COOK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, October 9, 1784.

LAST night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprise me of the safe arrival of Cook's last Voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in St. James's Square. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation, however, forced itself upon me with more violence than one that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be

worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favour was converted into an opposition that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any that had preceded it. When he departed, he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well-disposed to serve him. At his return he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been restored, was magnified to an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing, in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world, indeed, will not take notice, or see that the dispensation bore evident marks of Divine displeasure ; but a mind, I think, in any degree spiritual cannot overlook them. We know from Truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions ; I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know that even in a sensible man, it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so that he was in sport ; it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or stone may be worshipped blameless, a bap-

tized man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honours to be paid him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege.¹

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions. I have not left myself room to say any thing of the love we feel for you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXXVII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

SENDS HIM "THE TASK"—VARIOUS PARTICULARS ABOUT IT.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

October 10, 1794.

I SEND you four quires of verse, which having sent I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of till I see them in print. I have not, after all, found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous; though in so long a work, and in a work that requires

¹ Note by HAYLEY. "Having enjoyed, in the year 1772, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious seaman, on board his own ship, the *Resolution*, I cannot pass the present letter without observing, that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook in the affair alluded to. From the little personal acquaintance which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted under any circumstances with such impious arrogance as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty."

nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape : where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet ; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge, at least, I shall be clear ; for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one and only one compliment, which was so justly due that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion (I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton), but the compliment I mean is to Mr. Smith. It is, however, so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you to whom I disclose the secret ; a delicacy on my part which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons ; first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance ; and, secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that

I may please them ; but I will not please them at the expense of my conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature ; not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience ; not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I varied as much as I could (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string), I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance ; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect, however, I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency : to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CXXVIII.

*To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.*CONDOLENCE ON THE DEATH OF HIS MOTHER—"THE TASK"
AND "TIROCINIUM."

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, November, 1784.

To condole with you on the death of a mother aged eighty-seven, would be absurd; rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine, in this respect, have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine, dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long; and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say, that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal; and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen; but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement, within one degree of solitude,

and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me, indeed, a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again ; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter or early in the spring.

You will find it, perhaps, on the whole, more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a poem in six books, called "The Task." To which will be added another which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, "Tirocinium," on the subject of education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

W. C.

CXXIX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MR. NEWTON DISPLEASED ABOUT "THE TASK" NOT HAVING
BEEN COMMUNICATED TO HIM.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, November 20, 1784.

I AM happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not, at least, disgust the public. For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation ; and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity,

you would, however, beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause of being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event : it is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now is, to give you information on the following subject. The moment Mr. Newton knew (and I took care that he should learn it first from me) that I had communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmurs of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing, however, that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an extract, by way of specimen, or (which he should like better still) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request, for many reasons (but especially because I would no more show my poem piecemeal, than I would my house if I had one ; the merits of the structure, in either case, being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it), I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof sheets I have absolutely, though civilly refused : but I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work ; and to these I have added an extract as he

desired ; selecting, as most suited to his taste—The view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *à merveille*. We not only approve, but admire : no apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favourable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I see in him that good sense and courage that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate

W. C.

CXXX.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

BALLOONS—BISHOP BAGOT AND HIS BROTHERS—MR. NEWTON
STILL OFFENDED.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, December 18, 1784.

I CONDOLE with you that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you that you escaped an ague. I should be very well

pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail, with a philosopher or two on board ; but, at the same time, should be very sorry to expose myself for any length of time to the rigour of the upper regions at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind which must needs accompany them in their flight ; advantages which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons for the compliment that I paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place, then, I wished the world to know that I have no objection to a bishop, *quia* bishop. In the second place, the brothers were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the *Monthly Review*, on account of a sermon which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof of both his good sense and his unfeigned piety. For these causes me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man who had been publicly traduced ; and, indeed, the Reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them ; having taken occasion, by the sermon preached at the Bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say everything handsome of his lordship, who, whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance at

least could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr. Newton that did not please me, and returned an answer to it that possibly may not have pleased him. We shall come together again soon, I suppose, upon as amicable terms as usual; but at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

Yours, with love to you all,

W. C.

CXXXI.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

HOW HE STANDS WITH MR. NEWTON—EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON
—LUNARDI AND BLANCHARD, OF BALLOON CELEBRITY.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, January 15, 1785.

YOUR letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a letter was the more easily written because the writing of it had been long

delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as yours and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations, we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you, with any certainty of information, upon what terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month, I believe, has passed since I heard from him ; but my *friseur* having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and, having called at Hoxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not pleased that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect that he was even mortified at being informed that a certain inscribed poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the Muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH.

Here Johnson lies, a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud ;
Whose prose was eloquence, by Wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought ;

Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song :
Who many a noble gift from Heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies !

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin ; and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man, I presume, of great good sense and spirit (his letters, at least, and his enterprising turn bespeak him such) ; a man qualified to shine, not only among the stars, but in the more useful though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the Channel in a balloon ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason why this vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when, for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse ? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

CXXXII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MR. NEWTON NOW SATISFIED—FAME MAY BRING PRETENDED
FRIENDS ABOUT COWPER AGAIN—A BIRD'S NEST.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, April 30, 1785.

I WAS very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last: "I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication." Now, therefore, we are friends again. Now he once more inquires after the work; which, till he had disburdened himself of this acknowledgment, neither he nor I, in any of our letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them. Both your mother and I have studiously deposited them with those who, we thought, were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only a hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such that they were sure to prevail.

You mention Bensley. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were schoolfellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again; and some whom I never held in that estimation will,

like Bensley (who was but a boy when I left London), boast of a connexion with me which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney ; and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour ; and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, I believe, in the life of one of our poets, says, that he retired from the world flattering himself that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him. I think his observation upon it is, that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual is soon filled up ; that a man may always be obscure, if he chooses to be so ; and that he who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected.

Your mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white contained in a little hole in the gate-post caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's-nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent bird ; my nest is in a little nook, here I brood and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectations.

Yours truly,

W. C.

CXXXIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

COWPER'S SUMMER-HOUSE, OR BOUDOIR—SENDS HILL HIS NEW VOLUME.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *boudoir*. It is a summer-house, not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honeysuckles; and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in 'the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden-mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But (thanks to my *boudoir*!) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of November, that he might

publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience, you will perceive, is in no situation exempted from the severest trials ; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

CXXXIV.

To LADY HESKETH.

RENEWS HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIS COUSIN.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, October 12, 1786.

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure ; but I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter franked by my uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself, "This is just as it should be. We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more are actually returned." You perceive, therefore, that you judged well when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise than, as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprise ; for I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value : if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been

dormant for want of employment ; but I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes, in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure ; at times, too, when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights' Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Netley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years. Should I say within this twelvemonth, I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to feel no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend, Sir Thomas. I should remember him, indeed, at any rate, on account of his personal kindness to myself ; but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for, with many peculiarities, he had more sense than any of his acquaintance), and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done. As it was the last, so it was the best proof that he could give of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me ; that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter ; but it is no matter. I must tell you, however, my cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That

I am happy in my situation, is true : I live, and have lived these twenty years, with Mrs. Unwin ; to whose affectionate care of me, during the far greater part of that time, it is, under Providence, owing that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind that has made all that care and attention necessary—an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject ; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain, neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my uncle's good health. To enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is much ; but to have that day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these postdiluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy, for the most part, are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear cousin, dejection of spirits, which I suppose may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many ; but composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write, therefore, generally, three hours in the

morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write; for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer, at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer, at Olney. Ay, and the winters also; I have seldom left it; and, except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never, I believe, a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved cousin; I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin,

W. C.

CXXXV.

To LADY HESKETH.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS FINANCES—IS TRANSLATING HOMER.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, November 9, 1785.

WHOSE last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an *old* one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down

together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste, with which you both relish what you like ; and after all drawbacks upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But, above all, I honour "John Gilpin," since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well ; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted anything, and given delicately to understand that the inquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively, declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply yes. Whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please ; and add moreover, that my affection

for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse; although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life, depend upon. My own income has been better than it is; but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time, by the help of good management, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelve-month. Now, my beloved cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it; but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy, a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner

that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more. I will trouble you with some papers of proposals when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret: it is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it but Mrs. Unwin and her son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am on the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprise in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say; a period which I do not conceive to be very near. I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done: there is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years; I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter; there was more hair in the world than ever

had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly, having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth, which being worn with a small bag, and a black ribbon about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

W. C.

P.S. That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items: That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

CXXXVI.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

HOMER—HIS BROTHER THE BISHOP.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, January 15, 1786.

I HAVE just time to give you a hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has unexpectedly encountered, and at which I suppose that you have been somewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London, and a warm friend in General Cowper; he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this

I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice; and accordingly, the day before yesterday, I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation, they would find the former parts of the work not less so; for if a writer flags anywhere, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate. . . . You may say, perhaps (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say), "It is well; but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?" I answer, or rather *should* answer, "By no means—not as a poet; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority, I reprobate my own undertaking."

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops, that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are; but your brother, learned as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend, very affectionately, W. C.

CXXXVII.

To LADY HESKETH.

IN GREAT HOPES OF A VISIT FROM HER.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, February 9, 1786.

I HAVE been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that I doubt not we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again; I shall hear your voice; we shall take walks together; I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May

or beginning of June ; because, before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats ; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine ; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention, the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present ; but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author ; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made ; but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament ; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He

swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu ! my dearest, dearest cousin,

W. C.

CXXXVIII.

To LADY HESKETH.

IMPATIENT TO SEE HER—DOES NOT WANT TO SUBMIT HIS HOMER TO CRITICS BEFORE PUBLICATION—THURLOW'S FORMER PROMISE TO PROVIDE FOR HIM.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, February 11, 1786.

It must be (I suppose) a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you ; what we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep ; in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you, that by the diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I

have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it, do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let *Maty* be the only *critic* that has anything to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself.

A letter to Mr. Urban, in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than anything I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has, no doubt, forgotten it entirely; and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e and her sister, in King-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said, "Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will." "These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled and said, "Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention

to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose that he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely,

W. C.

CXXXIX.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

CONSOLATION ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

Olney, February 27, 1786.

ALAS ! alas ! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you ! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it. By the close of your letter it should seem, that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know by experience that they are neither few nor small ; and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before, yet I do sincerely rejoice in this, that whereas there is but one true Comforter in the universe under afflictions such as yours, you both know him and know where to seek him. I thought you a man the most happily mated that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish that, short as my acquaintance was with her, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs. Unwin sympathizes with you also most sincerely, and you neither are nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers as we

can make at Olney. I will not detain you longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to commit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you a sorrowful adieu !

Adieu ! ever yours,

W. C.

CXL

To LADY HESKETH.

SHE IS TO LIVE IN THE VICARAGE AT OLNEY—IDLE YOUTHFUL
DAYS OF HIM AND THURLOW.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, April 17, 1786.

IF you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life !" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I should wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour nor alcove, nor other shade except the shadow of the house ; but we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden affords us the easiest

communication imaginable, will save the roundabout by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows to a village called Emberton; and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor; that is to say, I slept three years in his house; but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton-row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie, cousin, how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily if he would deserve it at my hands: that I did so once is certain. The Duchess of —, who in the world sets her agoing? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning like so many whirligigs for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin, W. C.

CXL.

To LADY HESKETH.

HER NEAR APPROACH—THE THROCKMORTONS—DELICIOUS
PRAISE—HE WILL TRY NOT TO BE TOO MUCH AGITATED.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I HAVE at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will, therefore, now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a handbox, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which, therefore, I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure, however, that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered while we were in the Wilderness. So finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should

go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Browne, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer; and for aught that appears, so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last; and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know, perhaps, that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that you have sent me; all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language; and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman: the taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the "Task" was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend. We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines—

The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss;
And seeking grace to improve the present good,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *non-chalance*, "Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere; where are they?" He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation—"Oh, I will tell you where they must be—in the 'Night Thoughts.'"
I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion; but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible, that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines; and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect of the most advantageous kind upon them. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin! God grant that our friendship, which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a

separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever.

For you must know, that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be,

Yours, for ever,

W. C.

CXLII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

ABOUT TO LEAVE OLNEY.

Olney, June 19, 1786.

MY dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village two miles distant, we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton ; a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure-grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air and

good walking-room in the winter ; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where seven months in the year I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W. C.

CXLIII.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

LADY HESKETH HAS COME—DELIGHT IN THE PROSPECT OF
GOING TO LIVE AT WESTON.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, July 3, 1786.

AFTER a long silence I begin again. Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases everybody, and is pleased in her turn with everything she finds at Olney ; is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her.

And now I shall communicate news that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother lived in it. Your view of it was not only just but prophetic. It had not only the

aspect of a place built for the purposes of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand : the bolts and bars are to be



THE ALCOVE IN MR. THROCKMORTON'S PLEASURE-GROUNDS.

loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us ; and the expense of living in it not greater than we

are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us ; and the house is large enough to take us and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will, I hope, prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood ; there we shall have most agreeable neighbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy-smelling fumes of the marsh miasma ; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer ; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds, in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement ; and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. So far is well : the rest is left to Heaven.

Yours ever,

W. C.

CXLIV.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

ABOUT TO MIGRATE TO WESTON—PRAISE OF FUSELI, WHO
REVISED COWPER'S HOMER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, August 31, 1786.

I BEGAN to fear for your health, and every day said to myself, I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask him how he does—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since, had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think, good for little else.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston. Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country. The imprisonment that we have suffered here for so many winters has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgment that you form of Fuseli, a foreigner; but you may assure yourself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and has given

me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire; rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu! mon ami, yours faithfully,

W. C.

OXLV.

To LADY HESKETH.

HAPPY IN HIS NEW HOUSE.

Weston Lodge, November 26, 1786.

It is my birthday, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burden to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensate all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh! for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps, therefore, by that time you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house, accordingly, since it has been occupied by us

and our *meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I



WESTON • LODGE.

do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable

translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner :

“ And may at length my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage ! ”

For if it is not a hermitage, at least it is a much better thing ; and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart staircase, and three bed-chambers of convenient dimensions ; in short, such a house as this.

Good night, and may God bless thee.

W. C.

CXLVI.

To LADY HESKETH.

THE DEATH OF MR. UNWIN.

The Lodge, December 4, 1786.

I SENT you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that anything occurs, in consequence of our late loss, more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is

the more prudent as well as the more Christian course, to possess the comforts that we find in it as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that God who gave them, may, when he pleases, take them away ; and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life, when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become more useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of, the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were, many of them, awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management ; and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent ; by his literary proficiency too clever for a schoolboy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life, of such a character and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others ; and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will, nevertheless, be explained hereafter, and must in the meantime be revered in silence. It is well for his mother that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence ;

else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death, of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

W. C.

CXLVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

BURNS' POEMS, THEN NEW.

DEAR SIR,

Weston, July 24, 1787.

THIS is the first time I have written these six months,¹ and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you, both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me. In my present state of mind, I taste nothing; nevertheless, I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

¹ Being hindered by a very severe attack of his malady, which took place in his fatal month of January.

I have therefore read Burns' poems, and have read them twice ; and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them, on the whole, a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life, since Shakspeare (I should rather say since Prior), who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be a pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark-lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine, but his uncouth dialect spoiled all ; and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ram-feezeled*.

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant,

W. C.

CXLVIII.

To LADY HESKETH.

REQUEST BY THE NORTHAMPTON PARISH CLERK FOR VERSES
TO PREFIX TO THE BILLS OF MORTALITY—MR. MACKENZIE,
AUTHOR OF THE “MAN OF FEELING.”

The Lodge, November 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us or yourself with a journey to Weston.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and, being desired to sit, spoke as follows: “Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All Saints, in Northampton; brother of Mr. Cox, the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You will do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one.” To this I replied: “Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, everybody knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose.”—“Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him; but he is a gentleman of so

much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, "Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too, for the same reason." But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The wagon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton, loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style: A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one* that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. Mackenzie. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than anybody.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then he returned it to her, saying, "I am a poor man, it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it."

Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Yours ever,

W. C.

OXLIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

DEAR SIR,

The Lodge, February 14, 1788.

THOUGH it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me, nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because, apprised as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might allege will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest parts of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good spirits which generally accompany it, are, in reality, blessings only according

to the use we make of them, till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been, than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which for want of some such check they have given entirely to dissipation! I therefore account you happy, who, young as you are, need not be informed that you cannot always be so; and who already know, that the materials upon which age can alone build its comfort, should be brought together at an earlier period. You have indeed, in losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His example was not buried with him, but happily for you (happily because you are desirous to avail yourself of it) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

W. C.

CL.

To LADY HESKETH.

HANNAH MORE—TRIAL OF WARREN HASTINGS, HIS SCHOOL-FELLOW.

The Lodge, February 16, 1788.

I SHALL be glad to see Hannah More's poem; she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy, both in her thoughts and language, than half the he rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to

acquire that learning at a distance ; and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing—what you will never have an opportunity to see and hear hereafter—the trial of a man who has been greater and more feared than the Great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we certainly have been tyrants in the East ; and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble ! While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my schoolfellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value.

Farewell.

W. C.

CLI.

To LADY HESKETH.

BURKE'S SPEECH ON THE IMPEACHMENT—INVECTIVE IS THE
CUSTOMARY STYLE ON SUCH OCCASIONS.

The Lodge, February 22, 1788.

I do not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective ; but you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in

all countries, been thus conducted. The style of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully to the present ; and like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this in particular seems to have been founded originally in reason, and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state, must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, lest he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy, or of a consciousness that, after all, he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid ; must call him tyrant, and traitor, and everything else that is odious, and all this to his face, because all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel ; and if he cannot prove it, he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and, at the best, to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him.

I was glad to learn from the papers, that our cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

CLIX.

To LADY HESKETH.

A FOXHUNT—COWPER IN AT THE DEATH.

The Lodge, March 3, 1758.

ONE day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I, having taken our morning walk, and returning homeward through the Wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all that time in our orchard : presently we heard a terrier belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the Wilderness, the hounds entered also ; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the Grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman, dismounting, begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him—a conclusion which, I suppose, he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after

their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead Reynard, and rejoined us in the Grove with all his dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay, and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having by the aid of a pitchfork lodged Reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses, contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the hounds assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds; one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when throwing the fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, "tear him to pieces!" at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you now know as much of 'the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,

W. C.

CLIII.

*To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.*RAIN AFTER LONG DROUGHT—SUMMER RAPIDLY LEAVING, AND
LIFE ITSELF TOO.

Weston, June 23, 1788.

It has pleased God to give us rain, without which, this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time as in the winter. The goodness and power of God are never, I believe, so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal; and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above. But he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding; and that, though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers because he commands them. When therefore at last the blessing descends, you shall hear even in the streets the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim, "Thank God!"—confessing themselves indebted to his favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give him the glory. I can hardly doubt, therefore, that the earth is sometimes parched, and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the Power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin's daughter and son-in-law have lately spent some time with us. We shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons (he was once minister of Olney); and when they leave us, we expect that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer indeed is leaving us at a rapid rate, as do all the seasons; and though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration. The answer of the old patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Whether we look back from fifty or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived while we have been profitably employed. Alas! then, making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Were men in general to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise.

Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad.

Adieu,

W. C.

CLIV.

TO LADY HESKETH.

HOPES TO HAVE HER IN HIS PLEASANT ORCHARD—HIS DOG AND
THE WATER-LILY—HIS BALLADS ON THE SLAVE-TRADE.

The Lodge, June 27, 1788.

FOR the sake of a longer visit, my dearest coz, I can be well content to wait. The country, this country at least, is pleasant at all times, and when winter is come, or near at hand, we shall have the better chance for being snug. I know your passion for retirement indeed, or for what we call *deedy* retirement; and the F——s intending to return to Bath with their mother, when her visit at the Hall is over, you will then find here exactly the retirement in question. I have made in the orchard the best winter-walk in all the parish, sheltered from the east and from the north-east, and open to the sun, except at his rising, all the day. Then we will have Homer and Don Quixote; and then we will have saunter and chat, and one laugh more before we die. Our orchard is alive with creatures of all kinds; poultry of every denomination swarms in it, and pigs, the drollest in the world.

I must tell you a feat of my dog Beau. Walking by the river-side, I observed some water-lilies, floating at a little distance from the bank. They are a large white flower, with an orange-coloured eye, very beautiful. I had a desire to gather one, and having your long cane in my hand, by the help of it endeavoured to

bring one of them within my reach. But the attempt proved vain, and I walked forward. Beau had all the while observed me very attentively. Returning soon



RIVER OUSE : COWPER'S DOG AND THE WATER LILY.

after toward the same place, I observed him plunge into the river, while I was about forty yards distant from him, and when I had nearly reached the spot,

he swam to land with a lily in his mouth, which he came and laid at my foot.

Mr. Rose, whom I have mentioned to you as a visitor of mine for the first time soon after you left us, writes me word that he has seen my ballads against the slave-mongers, but not in print. Where he met with them, I know not. Mr. Bull begged hard for leave to print them at Newport-Pagnel, and I refused, thinking that it would be wrong to anticipate the nobility, gentry, and others, at whose pressing instance I composed them, in their designs to print them. But perhaps I need not have been so squeamish ; for the opportunity to publish them in London seems now not only ripe but rotten. I am well content. There is but one of them with which I am myself satisfied, though I have heard them all well spoken of. But there are very few things of my own composition that I can endure to read when they have been written a month, though at first they seem to me to be all perfection.

Mrs. Unwin, who has been much the happier since the time of your return hither has been in some sort settled, begs me to make her kindest remembrance.

Yours, my dear, most truly,

W. C.

CLV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esq.

SORRY FOR ROSE'S DEPARTURE FROM WESTON—HIS DOG BEAU
AND THE WATER-LILY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, August 18, 1788.

I LEFT you with a sensible regret, alleviated only by the consideration that I shall see you again in October. I was under some concern, also, lest, not being able to give you any certain directions myself, nor knowing where you might find a guide, you should wander and fatigue yourself, good walker as you are, before you could reach Northampton. Perhaps you heard me whistle just after our separation; it was to call back Beau, who was running after you with all speed to intreat you to return to me. For my part, I took my own time to return, and did not reach home till after one; and then so weary, that I was glad of my great chair; to the comforts of which I added a crust and a glass of rum and water, not without great occasion. Such a foot-traveller am I!

I have not been idle since you went, having not only laboured as usual at the Iliad, but composed a *spick-and-span* new piece called "The Dog and the Water Lily," which you shall see when we meet again. I believe I related to you the incident which is the subject of it. I have also read most of Lavater's Aphorisms; they appear to me some of them wise, many of them whimsical, a few of them false, and not a few of them extravagant. *Nil illi medium*

W. C.



YARDLEY OAK.

CLVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esq.

YARDLEY OAK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, September 11, 1788.

SINCE your departure I have twice visited the oak, and with an intention to push my inquiries a mile beyond

it, where it seems I should have found another oak much larger and much more respectable than the former ; but once I was hindered by the rain, and once by the sultriness of the day. This latter oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages, and is said to have been an oak at the time of the Conquest. If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together, and even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I shall yet be glad to do so ; for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe, but by so doing I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

W. C.

CLVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esq.

"MEMORIA TECHNICA"—HAWKINS' LIFE OF JOHNSON.

DEAR SIR,

The Lodge, January 19, 1789.

I HAVE taken, since you went away, many of the walks which we have taken together ; and none of them, I believe, without thoughts of you. I have, though not a good memory in general, yet a good local memory ; and can recollect, by the help of a tree or stile, what you said on that particular spot. For this reason I

purpose, when the summer is come, to walk with a book in my pocket. What I read at my fireside I forget, but what I read under a hedge, or at the side of a pond, that pond and that hedge will always bring to my remembrance ; and this is a sort of *memoria technica* which I would recommend to you, if I did not know that you have no occasion for it.

I am reading Sir John Hawkins,¹ and still hold the same opinion of his book as when you were here. There are in it, undoubtedly, some awkwardnesses of phrase ; and, which is worse, here and there some unequivocal indications of a vanity not easily pardonable in a man of his years ; but on the whole I find it amusing, and, to me at least, to whom everything that has passed in the literary world within these five-and-twenty years is new, sufficiently replete with information. Mr. Throckmorton told me, about three days since, that it was lately recommended to him, by a sensible man, as a book that would give him great insight into the history of modern literature and modern men of letters, a commendation which I really think it merits. Fifty years hence, perhaps, the world will feel itself obliged to him.

W. C.

¹ His Life of Dr. Johnson.

CLVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

WANTS A CUCKOO CLOCK—JOHNSON, BOSWELL, AND HAWKINS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The Lodge, June 5, 1789.

I AM going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks ; for in London only can our strange necessities be supplied. You must buy for me, if you please, a cuckoo clock ; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one, in that narrow part of Holborn which leads into Broad St. Giles'. It seems they are well-going clocks, and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's Tour. I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscriminately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they in return made him a coxcomb ; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and, flattered as he was, sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London, but unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend, when you should once be well acquainted with him, and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

W. C.

CLIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

THE SAME SUBJECTS.

AMICO MIO,

The Lodge, June 20, 1789.

I AM truly sorry that it must be so long before we can have an opportunity to meet. My cousin, in her last letter but one, inspired me with other expectations, expressing a purpose, if the matter could be so contrived, of bringing you with her ; I was willing to believe that you had consulted together on the subject, and found it feasible. A month was formerly a trifle in my account ; but at my present age I give it all its importance, and grudge that so many months should yet pass in which I have not even a glimpse of those I love, and of whom, the course of nature considered, I must ere long take leave for ever ; but I shall live till August.

Many thanks for the cuckoo, which arrived perfectly safe and goes well, to the amusement and amazement of all who hear it. Hannah lies awake to hear it, and I am not sure that we have not others in the house that admire his music as much as she.

Having read both Hawkins and Boswell, I now think myself almost as much a master of Johnson's character as if I had known him personally, and cannot but regret that our bards of other times found no such biographers as these. They have both been ridiculed, and the wits have had their laugh ; but such a history of Milton or Shakspeare as they have given of Johnson—oh how desirable !

W. C.

CLX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esq.

REGRETS FOR WASTED TIME—INVITATION—THE THIRD MEETING
IN THAT COUNTRY WITH LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, July 23, 1789.

You do well, my dear sir, to improve your opportunity : to speak in the rural phrase, this is your sowing time, and the sheaves you look for can never be yours, unless you make that use of it. The colour of our whole life is generally such as the three or four first years in which we are our own masters make it. Then it is that we may be said to shape our own destiny, and to treasure up for ourselves a series of future successes or disappointments. Had I employed my time as wisely as you, in a situation very similar to yours, I had never been a poet perhaps ; but I might by this time have acquired a character of more importance in society, and a situation in which my friends would have been better pleased to see me. But three years mis-spent in an attorney's office were almost of course followed by

several more equally mis-spent in the Temple ; and the consequence has been, as the Italian epitaph says, "*Sto qui.*" The only use I can make of myself now, at least the best, is to serve *in terrorem* to others, when occasion may happen to offer, that they may escapè (so far as my admonitions can have any weight with them) my folly and my fate. When you feel yourself tempted to relax a little of the strictness of your present discipline, and to indulge in amusement incompatible with your future interest, think on your friend at Weston.

Having said this, I shall next, with my whole heart, invite you hither, and assure you that I look forward to approaching August with great pleasure, because it promises me your company. After a little time (which we shall wish longer) spent with us, you will return invigorated to your studies, and pursue them with the more advantage. In the meantime you have lost little, in point of season, by being confined to London. Incessant rains, and meadows under water, have given to the summer the air of winter, and the country has been deprived of half its beauties.

It is time to tell you that we are well, and often make you our subject. This is the third meeting that my cousin and we have had in this country ; and a great instance of good fortune I account it, in such a world as this, to have expected such a pleasure thrice without being once disappointed. Add to this wonder as soon as you can by making yourself one of the party.

W. C.

CLXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esq.

MRS. PIOZZI'S TRAVELS—POPE'S SEVERITY IN THE DUNCIAD.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, August 8, 1789.

COME when you will, or when you can, you cannot come at a wrong time ; but we shall expect you on the day mentioned.

If you have any book that you think will make pleasant evening reading, bring it with you. I now read Mrs. Piozzi's Travels to the ladies after supper, and shall probably have finished them before we shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It is the fashion, I understand, to condemn them. But we who make books ourselves, are more merciful to book-makers. I would that every fastidious judge of authors were himself obliged to write ; there goes more to the composition of a volume than many critics imagine. I have often wondered, that the same poet who wrote the Dunciad should have written these lines :

“The mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.”

Alas ! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received ! He was the less pardonable too, because experienced in all the difficulties of composition.

I scratch this between dinner and tea, a time I cannot write much without disordering my noddle, and bringing a flush into my face. You will excuse me, therefore, if, through respect for the two important considerations of health and beauty, I conclude myself

Ever yours,

W. C.

CLXII.

To LADY HESKETH.

ANXIETY ABOUT HER HEALTH—DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE HIS
MOTHER'S PICTURE.

The Lodge, February 26, 1790.

You have set my heart at ease, my cousin, so far as you were yourself the object of its anxieties. What other trouble it feels can be cured by God alone. But you are never silent a week longer than usual, without giving an opportunity to my imagination (ever fruitful in flowers of a sable hue) to tease me with them day and night. London is indeed a pestilent place, as you call it, and I would, with all my heart, that thou hadst less to do with it: were you under the same roof with me, I should know you to be safe, and should never distress you with melancholy letters.

I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's kindness in giving me the only picture of my mother that is to be found, I suppose, in all the world. I had rather possess it than the richest jewel in the British Crown, for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated. I remember her too, young as I was when she died, well enough to know that it is a very exact resemblance of her, and as such it is to me invaluable. Everybody loved her, and, with an amiable character so impressed upon all her features, everybody was sure to do so.

I have a very affectionate and a very clever letter from Johnson, who promises me the transcript of the books intrusted to him in a few days. I have a great

love for that young man : he has some drops of the same stream in his veins that once animated the original of that dear picture.

W. C.

CLXIII.

To MRS. BODHAM.

THANKS HER FOR SENDING HIS MOTHER'S PICTURE—HIS
RELATIONS BY THE MOTHER'S SIDE.

MY DEAREST ROSE,

Weston, February 27, 1790.

WHOM I thought withered and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive : nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her : I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year, yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a

multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought, in the days of my childhood, much to resemble my mother, and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her and my late uncle your father—somewhat of his irritability, and a little, I would hope, both of his and of her — I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention; but, speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say—*good nature*. Add to all this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's, and I think I shall have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is that, whatever I am, I love you all.

I account it a happy event that brought the dear boy, your nephew, to my knowledge, and that, breaking through all the restraints which his natural bashfulness imposed on him, he determined to find me out. He is amiable to a degree that I have seldom seen, and I often long with impatience to see him again.

I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am,

My dear, dear Rose, ever yours,

W. C.

P.S.—Your nephew tells me that his sister, in the qualities of the mind, resembles you: that is enough to

make her dear to me, and I beg you will assure her that she is so. Let it not be long before I hear from you.

CLXIV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esq.

THE PICTURE OF HIS MOTHER—INVITES THE BODHAMS TO
WESTON.

MY DEAR COUSIN JOHN,

Weston, February 28, 1790.

I HAVE much wished to hear from you, and though you are welcome to write to Mrs. Unwin as often as you please, I wish myself to be numbered among your correspondents.

I shall find time to answer you, doubt it not. Be as busy as we may, we can always find time to do what is agreeable to us. By the way, had you a letter from Mrs. Unwin? I am witness that she addressed one to you before you went into Norfolk; but your mathematico-poetical head forgot to acknowledge the receipt of it.

I was never more pleased in my life than to learn, and to learn from herself, that my dearest Rose¹ is still alive. Had she not engaged me to love her by the sweetness of her character when a child, she would have done it effectually now, by making me the most acceptable present in the world—my own dear mother's picture. I am, perhaps, the only person living who remembers her; but I remember her well, and can attest, on my own knowledge, the truth of the resem-

¹ Mrs. Ann Bodham.

blance. Amiable and elegant as the countenance is, such exactly was her own : she was one of the tenderest parents ; and so just a copy of her is, therefore, to me invaluable.

I wrote yesterday to my Rose to tell her all this, and to thank her for her kindness in sending it. Neither do I forget your kindness, who intimated to her that I should be happy to possess it.

She invites me into Norfolk, but alas ! she might as well invite the house in which I dwell ; for, all other considerations and impediments apart, how is it possible that a translator of Homer should lumber to such a distance ? But though I cannot comply with her kind invitation, I have made myself the best amends in my power, by inviting her, and all the family of Donnes, to Weston. Perhaps we could not accommodate them all at once, but in succession we could ; and can at any time find room for five, three of them being females, and one a married one. You are a mathematician : tell me, then, how five persons can be lodged in three beds (two males and three females), and I shall have good hope that you will proceed a senior optime ? It would make me happy to see our house so furnished.

I have not said the half that I have to say, but breakfast is at hand, which always terminates my epistles.

Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances attend you. Lady Hesketh is much disposed to love you ; perhaps all those who know you have some little tendency the same way.

W. C.

CLXV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esq.

GLAD THAT JOHNSON HAS GIVEN UP MATHEMATICAL PURSUITS
—ADVICE AS TO HIS DIVINITY STUDIES—THE REFORMATION
AND CALVINISM.

MY DEAR JOHN,

Weston, June 7, 1790.

You never pleased me more than when you told me you had abandoned your mathematical pursuits. It grieved me to think that you were wasting your time merely to gain a little Cambridge fame, not worth your having. I cannot be contented that your renown should thrive nowhere but on the banks of the Cam. Conceive a nobler ambition, and never let your honour be circumscribed by the paltry dimensions of a university! It is well that you have already, as you observe, acquired sufficient information in that science, to enable you to pass creditably such examinations as I suppose you must hereafter undergo. Keep what you have gotten, and be content. More is needless.

You could not apply to a worse than I am to advise you concerning your studies. I was never a regular student myself, but lost the most valuable years of my life in an attorney's office, and in the Temple. I will not, therefore, give myself airs, and affect to know what I know not. The affair is of great importance to you, and you should be directed in it by a wiser than I. To speak, however, in very general terms on the subject, it seems to me that your chief concern is with history, natural philosophy, logic, and divinity. As to metaphysics, I know little about them; but the very little

that I do know has not taught me to admire them. Life is too short to afford time even for serious trifles. Pursue what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man. Let your divinity, if I may advise, be the divinity of the glorious Reformation: I mean in contradiction to Arminianism, and all the *isms* that ever were broached in this world of error and ignorance.

The divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously. It has been that of the Church of Christ in all ages. It is the divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's Master, who met him in his way to Damascus.

I have written in great haste, that I might finish, if possible, before breakfast. Adieu! Let us see you soon—the sooner the better. Give my love to the silent lady, the Rose, and all my friends around you.

W. C.

CLXVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

ON ROSE'S APPROACHING MARRIAGE—A RIDDLE FOR THE
OCCASION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The Lodge, June 8, 1790.

AMONG the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself. Far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well-chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect

of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand temptations, to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe, and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether, therefore, a subject of much congratulation ; and mine, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's, is very sincere. Samson, at his marriage, proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither are you a Philistine. Yet expound me the following if you can :

What are they, which stand at a distance from each other, and meet without ever moving ?

Should you be so fortunate as to guess it, you may propose it to the company when you celebrate your nuptials ; and if you can win thirty changes of raiment by it, as Samson did by his, let me tell you they will be no contemptible acquisition to a young beginner.

You will not, I hope, forget your way to Weston in consequence of your marriage, where you and yours will be always welcome.

W. C.

CLXVII.

*To Lady Hesketh.*REFLECTIONS ON THE FRENCH DOCTRINES OF LIBERTY AND
EQUALITY.

Weston, July 7, 1790.

THE French, who, like all lively folks, are extreme in everything, are such in their zeal for freedom ; and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to a plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lackeys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Difference of rank and subordination are, I believe, of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well-being of society ; but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics, and unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at that, at their first escape from tyrannical shackles, they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings as they have sometimes treated their idols. To these, however, they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely. I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it.

W. C.

CLXVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esq.

TELLS JOHN HE IS A SCATTERBRAIN—LONGS TO SEE HIM AGAIN.

Weston, July 31, 1790.

You have by this time, I presume, answered Lady Hesketh's letter? If not, answer it without delay; and this injunction I give you, judging that it may not be entirely unnecessary; for though I have seen you but once, and only for two or three days, I have found out that you are a scatterbrain. I made the discovery, perhaps, the sooner, because in this you very much resemble myself, who in the course of my life have, through mere carelessness and inattention, lost many advantages; an insuperable shyness has also deprived me of many. And here again there is a resemblance between us. You will do well to guard against both, for of both I believe you have a considerable share as well as myself.

We long to see you again, and are only concerned at the short stay you propose to make with us. If time should seem to you as short at Weston as it seems to us, your visit here will be gone "as a dream when one awaketh, or as a watch in the night."

It is a life of dreams; but the pleasantest, one naturally wishes longest.

If you have Donne's Poems, bring them with you, for I have not seen them for many years, and should like to look them over.

You may treat us too, if you please, to a little of your music, for I seldom hear any, and delight much in

it. You need not fear a rival, for we have but two fiddles in the neighbourhood, one a gardener's, the other a tailor's—terrible performers both !

W. C.

CLXIX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esq.

A VISIT FROM THE DOWAGER LADY SPENCER.

(My Birthday.)

MY DEAREST JOHNNY, Weston, Friday, November 26, 1790.

I AM happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful, I suppose, to *every* man to be well grounded in the principles of jurisprudence ; and I take it to be a branch of science that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind, and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world ; in point of character, I mean, and accomplishments, the Dowager Lady Spencer. I may receive, perhaps, some honours hereafter, should my translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it ; but shall never receive any that I shall esteem so highly. She is indeed worthy to whom I should dedicate ; and may but my *Odyssey* prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.

Yours, my dear Johnny, with much affection,

W. C.

CLXX.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

HIS BAD HEALTH, AND FEARS ABOUT JANUARY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, January 4, 1791.

You would long since have received an answer to your last, had not the wicked clerk of Northampton delayed to send me the printed copy of my annual dirge, which I waited to enclose. Here it is at last, and much good may it do the readers !

I have regretted that I could not write sooner, especially because it well became me to reply as soon as possible to your kind inquiries after my health, which has been both better and worse since I wrote last. The cough was cured, or nearly so, when I received your letter ; but I have lately been afflicted with a nervous fever, a malady formidable to me above all others, on account of the terror and dejection of spirits that in my case always accompany it. I even looked forward, for this reason, to the month now current with the most miserable apprehensions ; for in this month the distemper has twice seized me. I wish to be thankful, however, to the Sovereign Dispenser both of health and sickness, that though I have felt cause enough to tremble, he gives me now encouragement to hope that I may dismiss my fears, and expect, for this January at least, to escape it.

Believe me, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

CLXXI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esq.

JOHN'S MERRY ANTICS.

Weston, January 21, 1791.

I KNOW that you have already been catechised by Lady Hesketh on the subject of your return hither before the winter shall be over, and shall therefore only say, that if you can come, we shall be happy to receive you. Remember, also, that nothing can excuse the non-performance of a promise but absolute necessity. Were you not extremely pleasant to us, and just the sort of youth that suits us, we should neither of us have said half so much, or, perhaps, a word on the subject.

Yours, my dear Johnny, are vagaries that I shall never see practised by any other ; and, whether you slap your ankle, or reel as if you were fuddled, or dance in the path before me, all is characteristic of yourself, and therefore to me delightful. I have hinted to you indeed, sometimes, that you should be cautious of indulging antic habits and singularities of all sorts, and young men in general have need enough of such admonition. But yours are a sort of fairy habits, such as might belong to Puck or Robin Goodfellow ; and therefore, good as the advice is, I should be half sorry should you take it. This allowance, at least, I give you : continue to take your walks, if walks they may be called, exactly in their present fashion, till you have taken orders. Then, indeed, forasmuch as a skipping, curvetting, bounding divine might be a spectacle not altogether seemly, I shall consent to your adoption of a more grave demeanour.

W. C.

CLXXII.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

ON BLANK VERSE, AND JOHNSON'S DISLIKE OF IT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston Underwood, February 26, 1791.

You delight me when you call *blank* verse the English *heroic* ; for I have always thought, and often said, that we have no other verse worthy to be so entitled. When you read my preface you will be made acquainted with my sentiments on this subject pretty much at large, for which reason I will curb my zeal, and say the less about it at present. That Johnson, who wrote harmoniously in rhyme, should have had so defective an ear as never to have discovered any music at all in blank verse, till he heard a particular friend of his reading it, is a wonder never sufficiently to be wondered at. Yet this is true on his own acknowledgment, and amounts to a plain confession (of which, perhaps, he was not aware when he made it) that he did not know how to read blank verse himself. In short, he either suffered prejudice to lead him in a string whithersoever it would, or his taste in poetry was worth little. I don't believe he ever read anything of that kind with enthusiasm in his life ; and as good poetry cannot be composed without a considerable share of that quality in the mind of the author, so neither can it be read or tasted as it ought to be without it. I have said all this in the morning fasting, but am soon going to my tea. When, therefore, I shall have told you, that we are now, in the course of our

printing, in the Second Book of the Odyssey, I shall only have time to add that

I am, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

I think your Latin quotations very applicable to the present state of France. But France is in a situation new and untried before.

CLXXIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

HE HAS HONOURS FROM CAMBRIDGE, NONE FROM OXFORD.

Weston, February 27, 1791.

Now, my dearest Johnny, I must tell thee in a few words how much I love and am obliged to thee for thy affectionate services.

My Cambridge honours are all to be ascribed to you, and to you only. Yet you are but a little man ; and a little man, into the bargain, who have kicked the mathematics, their idol, out of your study. So important are the endings which Providence frequently connects with small beginnings. Had you been here, I could have furnished you with much employment ; for I have so dealt with your fair MS. in the course of my polishing and improving, that I have almost blotted out the whole. Such, however, as it is, I must now send it to the printer, and he must be content with it, for there is not time to make a fresh copy. We are now printing the Second Book of the Odyssey.

Should the Oxonians bestow none of their notice on me on this occasion, it will happen, singularly enough, that as Pope received all his University honours in the subscription way from Oxford, and none at all from Cambridge, so I shall have received all mine from Cambridge, and none from Oxford. This is the more likely to be the case, because I understand, that on whatsoever occasion either of those learned bodies think fit to move, the other always makes it a point to sit still ; thus proving its superiority.

I shall send up your letter to Lady Hesketh in a day or two, knowing that the intelligence contained in it will afford her the greatest pleasure. Know, likewise, for your own gratification, that all the Scotch Universities have subscribed, none excepted.

We are all as well as usual ; that is to say, as well as reasonable folks expect to be on the crazy side of this frail existence.

I rejoice that we shall so soon have you again at our fireside.

W. C.

CLXXIV.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

BAGOT'S PAT QUOTATIONS ON THE STATE OF FRANCE—
FORGIVENESS OF SINS BY THE ATONEMENT OF ONE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, March 18, 1791.

I GIVE you joy that you are about to receive some more of my elegant prose, and I feel myself in danger of

attempting to make it even more elegant than usual, and thereby of spoiling it, under the influence of your commendations. But my old helter-skelter manner has already succeeded so well, that I will not, even for the sake of entitling myself to a still greater portion of your praise, abandon it.

I wonder where you find all your quotations, pat as they are to the present condition of France. Do you make them yourself, or do you actually find them? I am apt to suspect, sometimes, that you impose them only on a poor man who has but twenty books in the world, and two of them are your brother Chester's. They are, however, much to the purpose, be the author of them who he may.

I love and thank you for your benediction. If God forgive me my sins, surely I shall love him much, for I have much to be forgiven; but the quantum need not discourage me, since there is One whose atonement can suffice for all :

Τοῦ δὲ καθ' αἷμα ῥέεν, καὶ ἐμοῖ, 'καὶ ἀδελφοῖς
'Ημετέροις, αὐτοῦ σωζομένοις θανάτῳ.

Accept our joint remembrances, and believe me,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

CLXXV.

To MRS. THROCKMORTON.

EPIGRAM ON THE ILLIBERALITY OF OXFORD.

MY DEAR MRS. FROG,

Weston, April 1, 1791.

A WORD or two before breakfast, which is all that I shall have time to send you. You have not, I hope, forgot to tell Mr. Frog how much I am obliged to him for his kind though unsuccessful attempt in my favour at Oxford.¹ It seems not a little extraordinary that persons so nobly patronised themselves on the score of literature should resolve to give no encouragement to it in return. Should I find a fair opportunity to thank them hereafter, I will not neglect it :

Could Homer come himself, distress'd and poor,
And tune his harp at Rhedycina's door,
The rich old vixen would exclaim, (I fear,)
"Begone ! no tramper gets a farthing here."

Tom is delighted past measure with his wooden nag, and gallops at a rate that would kill any horse that had a life to lose.

Adieu.

W. C.

¹ Their answer was, that they subscribed to nothing.

CLXXVI.

To LADY HESKETH.THE POET HAS RECEIVED A LETTER FROM DR. COGSWELL OF
NEW YORK.

MY DEAREST COZ,

The Lodge, May 18, 1791.

HAS another of thy letters fallen short of its destination ; or wherefore is it that thou writest not ? One letter in five weeks is a poor allowance for your friends at Weston. One that I received two or three days since from Mrs. Frog, has not at all enlightened me on this head. But I wander in a wilderness of vain conjecture.

I have had a letter lately from New York, from a Dr. Cogswell of that place, to thank me for my fine verses, and to tell me, which pleased me particularly, that after having read the "Task," my first volume fell into his hands, which he read also, and was equally pleased with. This is the only instance I can recollect of a reader who has done justice to my first effusions ; for I am sure that in point of expression they do not fall a jot below my second, and that in point of subject they are for the most part superior. But enough, and too much of this. The "Task," he tells me, has been reprinted in that city.

• Adieu ! my dearest coz.

We have blooming scenes under wintry skies, and with icy blasts to fan them.

Ever thine,

W. C.

CLXXVII.

To DR. JAMES COGSWELL, New York.

SOME ACCOUNT OF COWPER'S OWN WRITINGS, AND OF SOME
RELIGIOUS PUBLICATIONS OF THE DAY.

DEAR SIR,

Weston-Underwood, near Olney, Bucks,
June 15, 1791.

YOUR letter and obliging present from so great a distance deserved a speedier acknowledgment, and should not have wanted one so long, had not circumstances so fallen out since I received them, as to make it impossible for me to write sooner. It is, indeed, but within this day or two that I have heard how, by the help of my bookseller, I may transmit an answer to you.

My title-page, as it well might, misled you. It speaks me of the Inner Temple, and so I am, but a member of that society only, not as an inhabitant. I live here, almost at the distance of sixty miles from London, which I have not visited these eight-and-twenty years, and probably never shall again. Thus it fell out that Mr. Morewood had sailed again for America before your parcel reached me ; nor should I (it is likely) have received it at all, had not a cousin of mine, who lives in the Temple, by good fortune received it first, and opened your letter. Finding for whom it was intended, he transmitted to me both that and the parcel. Your testimony of approbation of what I have published, coming from another quarter of the globe, could not but be extremely flattering, as was your obliging notice that the "Task" had been reprinted in your city. Both volumes, I hope, have a tendency to

discountenance vice, and promote the best interests of mankind ; but how far they shall be effectual to these invaluable purposes depends altogether on His blessing, whose truths I have endeavoured to inculcate. In the meantime I have sufficient proof that readers may be pleased, may approve, and yet lay down the book unedified.

During the last five years, I have been occupied with a work of a very different nature, a translation of the Iliad and Odyssey into blank verse, and the work is now ready for publication. I undertook it, partly because Pope's is too lax a version, which has lately occasioned the learned of this country to call aloud for a new one, and partly because I could fall on no better expedient to amuse a mind too much addicted to melancholy.

I send you, in return for the volumes with which you favoured me, three on religious subjects, popular productions that have not long been published, and that may not, therefore, yet have reached your country : The Christian Officer's Panoply, by a Marine Officer ; The Importance of the Manners of the Great ; and An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World. The two last are said to be written by a lady, Miss Hannah More, and are universally read by people of that rank to which she addresses them. Your manners, I suppose, may be more pure than ours, yet it is not unlikely that even among you may be found some to whom her strictures are applicable. I return you my thanks, sir, for the volumes you sent me, two of which I have read with pleasure ; Mr. Edwards' book, and the Conquest of Canaan. The rest I have not had time to read, except Dr. Dwight's Sermon,

which pleased me almost more than any that I have either seen or heard.

I shall account a correspondence with you an honour, and remain,

Dear Sir, your obliged and obedient servant,

W. C.

CLXXVIII.

To the REV. MR. HURDIS.¹

COWPER NOT SO SECLUDED AT WESTON AS HE WAS AT OLNEY
—RECOMMENDS TO HURDIS A CLOSE PURSUIT OF HIS HEBREW
STUDIES.

MY DEAR SIR,

Weston, August 9, 1791.

I NEVER make a correspondent wait for an answer through idleness, or want of proper respect for him ; but if I am silent, it is because I am busy or not well, or because I stay till something occur that may make my letter at least a little better than mere blank paper. I therefore write speedily in reply to yours, being at present neither much occupied, nor at all indisposed, nor forbidden by a dearth of materials.

I wish always, when I have a new piece in hand, to be as secret as you, and there was a time when I could be so. Then I lived the life of a solitary, was not visited by a single neighbour, because I had none with

¹ The Rev. James Hurdis, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and author of "The Village Curate." He died young, and was admired as a learned, elegant, and moral writer. Probably his sentiments at that time were not quite so evangelical as Cowper would have wished ; but the poet fondly hoped that they might yet become like his own.

whom I could associate, nor ever had an inmate. This was when I dwelt at Olney ; but since I have removed to Weston the case is different. Here I am visited by all around me, and study in a room exposed to all manner of inroads. It is on the ground-floor, the room in which we dine, and in which I am sure to be found by all who seek me. They find me generally at my desk, and with my work, whatever it be, before me, unless, perhaps, I have conjured it into its hiding-place before they have had time to enter.

I would heartily second the Bishop of Salisbury in recommending to you a close pursuit of your Hebrew studies, were it not that I wish you to publish what I may understand. Do both, and I shall be satisfied.

Your remarks, if I may but receive them soon enough to serve me in case of a new edition, will be extremely welcome.

W. C.

CLXXIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

SUDDEN ILLNESS OF MRS. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The Lodge, December 21, 1791.

It grieves me, after having indulged a little hope that I might see you in the holidays, to be obliged to disappoint myself. The occasion, too, is such as will ensure me your sympathy.

On Saturday last, while I was at my desk near the window, and Mrs. Unwin at the fireside opposite to it,

I heard her suddenly exclaim, "Oh! Mr. Cowper, don't let me fall!" I turned and saw her actually falling, together with her chair, and started to her side just in time to prevent her. She was seized with a violent giddiness, which lasted, though with some abatement, the whole day, and was attended, too, with some other very, very alarming symptoms. At present, however, she is relieved from the vertigo, and seems in all respects better.

She has been my faithful and affectionate nurse for many years, and consequently has a claim on all my attentions. She has them, and will have them as long as she wants them; which will probably be, at the best, a considerable time to come. I feel the shock, as you may suppose, in every nerve. God grant that there may be no repetition of it. Another such a stroke upon her would, I think, upset me completely; but at present I hold up bravely. W. C.

CLXXX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

HOPES MUCH FROM THEIR FRIENDSHIP, JUST COMMENCED—
PRAISES OF MRS. UNWIN—COWPER HAS NOT MANY BOOKS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, April 6, 1792.

GOD grant that this friendship of ours may be a comfort to us all the rest of our days, in a world where true friendships are rarities, and especially where, suddenly formed, they are apt soon to terminate! But, as I said before, I feel a disposition of heart toward you,

that I never felt for one whom I had never seen ; and that shall prove itself, I trust, in the event a propitious omen.

* * * * *

Horace says somewhere, though I may quote it amiss perhaps, for I have a terrible memory :

Utrumque nostrum incredibili modo
Consentit astrum.——

* * * Our *stars consent* ; at least, have had an influence somewhat similar, in another and more important article. * * * * *

It gives me the sincerest pleasure, that I may hope to see you at Weston ; for as to any migrations of mine, they must, I fear, notwithstanding the joy I should feel in being a guest of yours, be still considered in the light of impossibilities. Come then, my friend, and be as welcome, as the country people say, here, as the flowers in May. I am happy, as I say, in the expectation ; but the fear, or rather the consciousness, that I shall not answer on a nearer view, makes it a trembling kind of happiness, and a doubtful.

After the privacy which I have mentioned above, I went to Huntingdon ; soon after my arrival there, I took up my quarters at the house of the Rev. Mr. Unwin ; I lived with him while he lived, and ever since his death have lived with his widow. Her, therefore, you will find mistress of the house ; and I judge of you amiss, or you will find her just such as you would wish. To me she has been often a nurse, and invariably the kindest friend, through a thousand adversities that I have had to grapple with in the course of almost thirty years. I thought it better to intro-

duce her to you thus, than to present her to you, at your coming, quite a stranger.

Bring with you any books that you think may be useful to my commentatorship, for, with you for an interpreter, I shall be afraid of none of them. And in truth, if you think that you shall want them, you must bring books for your own use also, for they are an article with which I am *heinously unprovided*: being much in the condition of the man whose library Pope describes as—

No mighty store :

His own works neatly bound, and little more.

You shall know how this has come to pass hereafter.

Tell me, my friend, are your letters in your own handwriting? If so, I am in pain for your eyes, lest by such frequent demands upon them I should hurt them. I had rather write you three letters for one, much as I prize your letters, than *that* should happen. And now, for the present, adieu! I am going to accompany Milton into the lake of fire and brimstone, having just begun my annotations.

W. C.

CLXXXI.

To MRS. THROCKMORTON.

LADIES STEALING HIS WORKS—CALUMNIATED AS A FRIEND
TO THE SLAVE-TRADE.

MY DEAR LADY FROG,

Weston, April 16, 1792.

WHAT a delightful anecdote is that which you tell me of a young lady detected in the very act of stealing our

Catharina's praises ! Is it possible that she can survive the shame, the mortification, of such a discovery ? Can she ever see the same company again, or any company that she can suppose, by the remotest possibility, may have heard the tidings ? If she can, she must have an assurance equal to her vanity. A lady in London stole my song on the Broken Rose, or rather would have stolen, and have passed it for her own. But she, too, was unfortunate in her attempt ; for there happened to be a female cousin of mine in company, who knew that I had written it. It is very flattering to a poet's pride, that the ladies should thus hazard everything for the sake of appropriating his verses.

I may say with Milton, that I am fallen *on evil tongues and evil days*, being not only plundered of that which belongs to me, but being charged with that which does not. Thus it seems (and I have learned it from more quarters than one) that a report is, and has been some time, current in this and the neighbouring counties, that though I have given myself the air of declaiming against the Slave Trade in the "Task," I am in reality a friend to it ; and last night I received a letter from Joe Rye, to inform me that I have been much traduced and calumniated on this account. Not knowing how I could better or more effectually refute the scandal, I have this morning sent a copy to the Northampton paper, prefaced by a short letter to the printer, specifying the occasion. The verses are in honour of Mr. Wilberforce, and sufficiently expressive of my present sentiments on the subject. You are a wicked fair one for disappointing us of our expected visit, and therefore, out of mere spite, I will not insert them. I have been very ill these ten days, and for the same spite's sake will not tell

you what has ailed me. But lest you should die of a fright, I will have the mercy to tell you that I am recovering.

W. C.

CLXXXII.

To the REV. J. JEKYLL RYE.

DENIES THAT HE IS A FRIEND TO THE SLAVE-TRADE.

MY DEAR SIR,

Weston, April 16, 1792.

I AM truly sorry that you should have suffered any apprehensions, such as your letter indicates, to molest you for a moment. I believe you to be as honest a man as lives, and consequently do not believe it possible that you could in your letter to Mr. Pitts, or any otherwise, wilfully misrepresent me. In fact, you did not; my opinions on the subject in question were, when I had the pleasure of seeing you, such as in that letter you stated them to be, and such they still continue.

If any man concludes, because I allow myself the use of sugar and rum, that therefore I am a friend to the *Slave Trade*, he concludes rashly, and does me great wrong; for the man lives not who abhors it more than I do. My reasons for my own practice are satisfactory to myself, and they whose practice is contrary are, I suppose, satisfied with theirs. So far is good. Let every man act according to his own judgment and conscience; but if we condemn another for not seeing with our eyes, we are unreasonable; and if we reproach him on that account, we are uncharitable, which is a still greater evil.

I had heard, before I received the favour of yours, that such a report of me as you mention had spread about the country. But my informant told me that it was founded thus: The people of Olney petitioned Parliament for the abolition; my name was sought among the subscribers, but was not found; a question was asked, how that happened? Answer was made that I had once, indeed, been an enemy to the Slave Trade, but had changed my mind; for that, having lately read a history or an account of Africa, I had seen it there asserted, that till the commencement of that traffic, the negroes, multiplying at a prodigious rate, were necessitated to devour each other: for which reason I had judged it better that the trade should continue, than that they should be again reduced to so horrid a custom.

Now all this is a fable. I have read no such history; I never in my life read any such assertion; nor, had such an assertion presented itself to me, should I have drawn any such conclusion from it: on the contrary, bad as it were, I think it would be better the negroes should have eaten one another, than that we should carry them to market. The single reason why I did not sign the petition was, because I was never asked to do it; and the reason why I was never asked was, because I am not a parishioner of Olney.

Thus stands the matter. You will do me the justice, I dare say, to speak of me as of a man who abhors the commerce, which is now, I hope, in a fair way to be abolished, as often as you shall find occasion. And I beg you henceforth to do yourself the justice to believe it impossible that I should for a moment suspect you of duplicity or misrepresentation. I have been grossly

slandered, but neither by you, nor in consequence of anything that you have either said or written. I remain, therefore, still as heretofore, with great respect,

Much and truly yours,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin's compliments attend you.

CLXXXIII.

TO LADY HESKETH.

ALTERNATIONS OF JOY AND SORROW—VERSES TO WARREN HASTINGS.

MY DEAREST COZ,

Weston, May 20, 1792.

I HAVE often observed that there is a regular alternation of good and evil in the lot of men, so that a favourable incident may be considered as the harbinger of an unfavourable one, and *vice versa*. Dr. Madan's experience witnesses to the truth of this observation. One day he gets a broken head, and the next a mitre to heal it. I rejoice that he has met with so effectual a cure, though my joy is not unmingled with concern; for till now I had some hope of seeing him, but since I live in the north, and his episcopal call is in the west, that is a gratification, I suppose, which I must no longer look for.

My sonnet,¹ which I sent you, was printed in the Northampton paper last week, and this week it produced me a complimentary one in the same paper, which served to convince me at least, by the matter of

¹ To Mr. Wilberforce.

it, that my own was not published without occasion, and that it had answered its purpose.

My correspondence with Hayley proceeds briskly, and is very affectionate on both sides. I expect him here in about a fortnight ; and wish heartily, with Mrs. Unwin, that you would give him a meeting. I have promised him, indeed, that he shall find us alone, but you are one of the family.

I wish much to print the following lines in one of the daily papers. Lord S.'s vindication of the poor culprit in the affair of Cheit Sing has confirmed me in the belief, that he has been injuriously treated, and I think it an act merely of justice to take a little notice of him :

TO WARREN HASTINGS, Esq.

BY AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER.

Hastings ! I knew thee young, and of a mind
While young, humane, conversable, and kind !
Nor can I well believe thee—gentle THEN—
Now grown a villain and the WORST of men ;
But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd
And worried thee, as not themselves the BEST.

If thou wilt take the pains to send them to thy newsmonger, I hope thou wilt do well.

Adieu !

W. C.

CLXXXIV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esq.

NOT SORRY HIS ORDINATION IS POSTPONED—HAYLEY AT
WESTON ON A VISIT.

MY DEAREST OF ALL JOHNNIES, *Weston, May 20, 1792.*

I AM not sorry that your ordination is postponed. A year's learning and wisdom added to your present stock, will not be more than enough to satisfy the demands of your function. Neither am I sorry that you find it difficult to fix your thoughts to the serious point at all times: it proves, at least, that you attempt and wish to do it, and these are good symptoms. Woe to those who enter on the ministry of the gospel without having previously asked at least from God a mind and spirit suited to their occupation, and whose experience never differs from itself, because they are always alike vain, light, and inconsiderate! It is, therefore, matter of great joy to me to hear you complain of levity, and such it is to Mrs. Unwin. She is, I thank God, tolerably well, and loves you. As to the time of your journey hither, the sooner after June the better; till then we shall have company.

I forgot not my debts to your dear sister, and your aunt Balls. Greet them both with a brother's kiss, and place it to my account. I will write to them when Milton and a thousand other engagements will give me leave. Mr. Hayley is here on a visit. We have formed a friendship that I trust will last for life, and render us an edifying example to all future poets.

Adieu! Lose no time in coming after the time mentioned.

W. C.

CLXXXV.

To LADY HESKETH.

MRS. UNWIN STRUCK WITH PALSY—THANKFUL THAT HAYLEY WAS WITH THEM.

Weston, May 24, 1792.

I WISH with all my heart, my dearest coz, that I had not ill news for the subject of the present letter. My friend, my Mary, has again been attacked by the same disorder that threatened me last year with the loss of her, and of which you were yourself a witness. Gregson would not allow that first stroke to be paralytic, but this he acknowledges to be so ; and with respect to the former, I never had myself any doubt that it was ; but this has been much the severest. Her speech has been almost unintelligible from the moment that she was struck ; it is with difficulty that she opens her eyes, and she cannot keep them open ; the muscles necessary to the purpose being contracted ; and as to self-moving powers from place to place, and the use of her right hand and arm, she has entirely lost them.

It has happened well, that of all men living the man most qualified to assist and comfort me is here, though till within these few days I never saw him, and a few weeks since had no expectation that I ever should. You have already guessed that I mean Hayley—Hayley, who loves me as if he had known me from my cradle. When he returns to town, as he must, alas ! too soon, he will pay his respects to you.

I will not conclude without adding, that our poor patient is beginning, I hope, to recover from this stroke

also ; but her amendment is slow, as must be expected at her time of life and in such a disorder. I am as well myself as you have ever known me in a time of much trouble, and even better.

It was not possible to prevail on Mrs. Unwin to let me send for Dr. Kerr, but Hayley has written to his friend Dr. Austin a representation of her case, and we expect his opinion and advice to-morrow. In the mean time, we have borrowed an electrical machine from our neighbour Socket, the effect of which she tried yesterday and the day before, and we think it has been of material service.

She was seized while Hayley and I were walking, and Mr. Greatheed, who called while we were absent, was with her.

May 26, 1792.

Knowing that you will be anxious to learn how we go on, I write a few lines to inform you that Mrs. Unwin daily recovers a little strength, and a little power of utterance ; but she seems strongest, and her speech is more distinct, in a morning. Hayley has been all in all to us on this very afflictive occasion. Love him, I charge you, dearly for my sake. Where could I have found a man, except himself, who could have made himself so necessary to me in so short a time, that I absolutely know not how to live without him ?

Adieu, my dear sweet coz ! Mrs. Unwin, as plainly, as her poor lips can speak, sends her best love, and Hayley threatens in a few days to lay close siege to your affections in person.

W. C.

CLXXXVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

MRS. UNWIN BETTER—JOHN JOHNSON NOW WITH HIM.

Weston, June 10, 1792.

I DO indeed anxiously wish that everything you do may prosper; and should I at last prosper by your means, shall taste double sweetness in prosperity for that reason.

I rose this morning, as I usually do, with a mind all in sables. In this mood I presented myself to Mary's bedside, whom I found, though after many hours lying awake, yet cheerful, and not to be affected by my desponding humour. It is a great blessing to us both, that, poor feeble thing as she is, she has a most invincible courage, and a trust in God's goodness that nothing shakes. She is now in the study, and is certainly in some degree better than she was yesterday; but how to measure that little I know not, except by saying that it is just perceptible.

I am glad that you have seen my Johnny of Norfolk, because I know it will be a comfort to you to have seen your successor. He arrived, to my great joy, yesterday; and not having bound himself to any particular time of going, will, I hope, stay long with us. You are now once more snug in your retreat, and I give you joy of your return to it, after the bustle in which you have lived since you left Weston. Weston mourns your absence, and will mourn it till she sees you again. I have, however, in pursuit of your idea to compli-

ment Darwin, put a few stanzas together, which I shall subjoin ; you will easily give them all that you find they want, and match the song with another.

I am now going to walk with Johnny, much cheered since I began writing to you, and by Mary's looks and good spirits.

W. C.

CLXXXVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

PROPOSED VISIT TO EARTHAM—ABBOT IS PAINTING HIM.

Weston, July 15, 1792.

THE progress of the old nurse in Terence is very much like the progress of my poor patient in the road of recovery. I cannot, indeed, say that she moves, but advances not, for advances are certainly made, but the progress of a week is hardly perceptible. I know not, therefore, at present, what to say about this long-postponed journey. The utmost that it is safe for me to say at this moment, is this—You know that you are dear to us both : true it is that you are so, and equally true, that the very instant we feel ourselves at liberty, we will fly to Eartham. I have been but once within the hall-door since the Courtenays came home, much as I have been pressed to dine there, and have hardly escaped giving a little offence by declining it ; but though I should offend all the world by my obstinacy in this instance, I would not leave my poor Mary alone. Johnny serves me as a representative, and him I send without scruple.

Abbot is painting me so true,
That (trust me) you would stare,
And hardly know, at the first view,
If I were here, or there.

I have sat twice ; and the few who have seen his copy of me, are much struck with the resemblance. He is a sober, quiet man ; which, considering that I must have him at least a week longer for an inmate, is a great comfort to me.

My Mary sends her best love. She can walk now, leaning on my arm only, and her speech is certainly much improved. I long to see you.

Adieu ! Love me, and be sure of a return.

W. C.

CLXXXVIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

THE JOURNEY TO EARTHAM DECIDED UPON—PROPOSED ROUTE
—HOW STRANGE TRAVEL IS TO HIM.

Weston, July 22, 1792.

THIS important affair, my dear brother, is at last decided, and we are coming. Wednesday se'nnight, if nothing occur to make a later day necessary, is the day fixed for our journey. Our rate of travelling must depend on Mary's ability to bear it. Our mode of travelling will occupy three days unavoidably, for we shall come in a coach. Abbot finishes my picture to-morrow ; on Wednesday he returns to town, and is commissioned to order one down for us, with four steeds to draw it :

“Hollow pamper'd jades of Asia,
That cannot go but forty miles a day.”

Send us our route, for I am as ignorant of it almost as if I were in a strange country. We shall reach St. Alban's, I suppose, the first day ; say where we must finish our second day's journey, and at what inn we may repose ? As to the end of the third day, we know where that will find us, viz. in the arms, and under the roof, of our beloved Hayley.

General Cowper having heard a rumour of this intended migration, desires to meet me on the road, that we may once more see each other. He lives at Ham, near Kingston. Shall we go through Kingston, or near it ? for I would give him as little trouble as possible, though he offers very kindly to come as far as Barnet for that purpose. Nor must I forget Carwardine, who so kindly desired to be informed what way we should go. On what point of the road will it be easiest for him to find us ? On all these points you must be my oracle. My friend and brother, we shall overwhelm you with our numbers ; this is all the trouble that I have left. My Johnny of Norfolk, happy in the thought of accompanying us, would be brokenhearted to be left behind.

In the midst of all these solitudes, I laugh to think what they are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel. Other men steal away from their homes silently, and make no disturbance ; but when I move, houses are turned upside down, maids are turned out of their beds, all the counties through which I pass appear to be in an uproar : Surrey greets me by the mouth of the General, and Essex by that of Carwardine. How strange does all this seem, to a man who has seen no bustle, and made none, for twenty years together !

Adieu !

W. C.

CLXXXIX.

*To WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.*DOUBTS AND FEARS ABOUT HIS JOURNEY—HIS PICTURE
FINISHED, AND A GOOD LIKENESS.

Weston, July 29, 1792.

PRAYER has opened my passage at last, and obtained for me a degree of confidence that, I trust, will prove a comfortable viaticum to me all the way. On Wednesday, therefore, we set forth.

The terrors that I have spoken of would appear ridiculous to most, but to you they will not ; for you are a reasonable creature, and know well that, to whatever cause it be owing (whether to constitution, or to God's express appointment), I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night-season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise ; and though you may think there is much of the imaginary in it, will not deem it for that reason an evil less to be lamented. So much for fears and distresses. Soon, I hope, they shall all have a joyful termination, and I, my Mary, my Johnny, and my dog, be skipping with delight at Eartham.

Well ! this picture is at last finished, and well finished I can assure you. Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it, wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half-length, as it is technically but absurdly called ; that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle. To-morrow it goes to

town, and will hang some months at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.

I hope, or rather wish, that at Eartham I may recover that habit of study which, inveterate as it once seemed, I now seem to have lost—lost to such a degree, that it is even painful to me to think of what it will cost me to acquire it again.

Adieu! my dear, dear Hayley; God give us a happy meeting! Mary sends her love. She is in pretty good plight this morning, having slept well, and, for her part, has no fears at all about the journey.

Ever yours,

W. C.

CXC.

To MRS. COURTENAY.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS JOURNEY—BEAUTIES OF EARTHAM.

MY DEAREST CATHARINA, Eartham, Sussex, Aug. 12, 1792.

THOUGH I have travelled far, nothing did I see in my travels that surprised me half so agreeably as your kind letter; for, high as my opinion of your good nature is, I had no hopes of hearing from you till I should have written first; a pleasure which I intended to allow myself the first opportunity.

After three days' confinement in a coach, and suffering, as we went, all that could be suffered from excessive heat and dust, we found ourselves, late in the evening, at the door of our friend Hayley. In every other respect, the journey was extremely pleasant. At the Mitre in Barnet, where we lodged the first evening, we found our friend Rose, who had walked thither, from his

house in Chancery-lane, to meet us ; and at Kingston, where we dined the second day, I found my old and much-valued friend, General Cowper, whom I had not seen in thirty years, and but for this journey should never have seen again. Mrs. Unwin, on whose account I had a thousand fears before we set out, suffered as little from fatigue as myself, and begins, I hope, already to feel some beneficial effects from the air of Eartham, and the exercises that she takes in one of the most delightful pleasure-grounds in the world. They occupy three sides of a hill, lofty enough to command a view of the sea, which skirts the horizon to a length of many miles, with the Isle of Wight at the end of it. The inland scene is equally beautiful, consisting of a large and deep valley, well cultivated, and enclosed by magnificent hills, all crowned with wood. I had, for my part, no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a paradise ; and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.

Adieu !

W. C.

CXCI.

To LADY HESKETH.

DEATH OF HURDIS' SISTER—ABOUT COWPER HIMSELF AND
MRS. UNWIN.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

POOR Hurdis is broken-hearted for the loss of his favourite sister ; and my only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure me that you are in a state of recovery : otherwise I should

mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his ; for though nature designed you only for my cousin, you have had a sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that having no sister the daughter of my own mother, I thought it proper to have one the daughter of yours. Certain it is that I can by no means afford to lose you, and that unless you will be upon honour with me, to give me always a true account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health ; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them ; and if increase of appetite and a double portion of sleep be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here ; and could I be translated to Paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack, still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support in walking ; but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step. God knows what he designs for me ; but when I see those who are dearer to me than myself distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before

me, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this.

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and, in the opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the most exact resemblance possible.

W. C.

CXCII.

To the REV. MR. HURDIS.

CONSOLATION ON THE DEATH OF HIS SISTER.

MY DEAR SIR,

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

YOUR kind but very affecting letter found me, not at Weston, to which place it was directed, but in a bower of my friend Hayley's garden at Eartham, where I was sitting with Mrs. Unwin. We both knew, the moment we saw it, from whom it came; and, observing a red seal, both comforted ourselves that all was well at Burwash; but we soon felt that we were called not to rejoice but to mourn with you. We do indeed sincerely mourn with you; and if it will afford you any consolation to know it, you may be assured that every eye here has testified what our hearts have suffered for you. Your loss is great, and your disposition, I perceive, such as exposes you to feel the whole weight of it. I will not add to your sorrow by a vain attempt to assuage it; your own good sense, and the piety of your principles, will, of course, suggest to you the most powerful motives of acquiescence in the will of God. You will be sure to recollect that the stroke, severe as it is, is not the stroke of an enemy, but of a Father; and will find, I trust, hereafter, that like a father he

has done you good by it. Thousands have been able to say, and myself as loud as any of them, it has been good for me that I was afflicted ; but time is necessary to work us to this persuasion, and in due time it shall be yours. Mr. Hayley, who tenderly sympathizes with you, has enjoined me to send you as pressing an invitation as I can frame, to join me at this place. I have every motive to wish your consent. Both your benefit and my own, which, I believe, would be abundantly answered by your coming, ought to make me eloquent in such a cause. Here you will find silence and retirement in perfection, when you would seek them, and here such company as I have no doubt would suit you : all cheerful but not noisy, and all alike disposed to love you : you and I seem to have here a fair opportunity of meeting. It were a pity we should be in the same county, and not come together. I am here till the seventeenth of September, an interval that will afford you time to make the necessary arrangements, and to gratify me at last with an interview which I have long desired. Let me hear from you soon, that I may have double pleasure, the pleasure of expecting as well as that of seeing you.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, though still a sufferer by her last illness, is much better, and has received considerable benefit by the air of Eartham. She adds to mine her affectionate compliments, and joins me and Hayley in this invitation.

Mr. Romney is here, and a young man, a cousin of mine. I tell you who we are, that you may not be afraid of us.

Adieu ! May the Comforter of all the afflicted who seek him, be yours ! God bless you. W. C.

CXCIII.

To Lady Hesketh.

ABOUT TO RETURN HOME TO WESTON—HURDIS AT EARTHAM.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Eartham, September 9, 1792.

I DETERMINE, if possible, to send you one more letter, or at least, if possible, once more to send you something like one, before we leave Eartham. But I am in truth so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that like the man in the fable, who could leap well nowhere but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld, nor expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better; it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels peculiarly gratified; whereas here, I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like mountains—a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place could avail me little. Accordingly, I have not looked out for a house in Sussex, nor shall.

The intended day of our departure continues to be the seventeenth. I hope to reconduct Mrs. Unwin to The Lodge with her health considerably mended; but it is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand still fail her, so that she can

neither read nor work; mortifying circumstances both to her, who is never willingly idle.

On the eighteenth, I purpose to dine with the General, and to rest that night at Kingston; but the pleasure I shall have in the interview will hardly be greater than the pain I shall feel at the end of it, for we shall part, probably, to meet no more.

Johnny, I know, has told you that Mr. Hurdis is here. Distressed by the loss of his sister, he has renounced the place where she died, for ever, and is about to enter on a new course of life at Oxford. You would admire him much. He is gentle in his manners, and delicate in his person, resembling our poor friend Unwin, both in face and figure, more than any one I have ever seen. But he has not, at least he has not at present, his vivacity.

W. C.

CXCIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

ON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

MY DEAR SIR,

Weston, December 16, 1792.

WE differ so little, that it is a pity we should not agree. The possibility of restoring our diseased Government is, I think, the only point on which we are not of one mind. If you are right, and it cannot be touched in the medical way without danger of absolute ruin to the constitution, keep the doctors at a distance, say I, and let us live as long as we can. But perhaps physicians might be found, of skill sufficient

for the purpose, were they but as willing as able. Who are they? Not those honest blunderers the mob, but our governors themselves. As it is in the power of any individual to be honest if he will, any body of men are, as it seems to me, equally possessed of the same option. For I can never persuade myself to think the world so constituted by the Author of it, and human society, which is his ordinance, so shabby a business, that the buying and selling of votes and consciences should be essential to its existence. As to multiplied representation, I know not that I foresee any great advantage likely to arise from that. Provided there be but a reasonable number of reasonable heads laid together for the good of the nation, the end may as well be answered by five hundred as it would be by a thousand, and perhaps better. But, then, they should be honest as well as wise; and in order that they may be so, they should put it out of their own power to be otherwise. This they might certainly do if they would; and would they do it, I am not convinced that any great mischief would ensue. You say, "somebody must have influence," but I see no necessity for it. Let integrity of intention, and a due share of ability, be supposed, and the influence will be in the right place—it will all centre in the zeal and good of the nation. That will influence their debates and decisions, and nothing else ought to do it. You will say, perhaps, that, wise men and honest men as they are supposed, they are yet liable to be split into almost as many differences of opinion as there are individuals; but I rather think not. It is observed of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, that each always approved and seconded the plans and views of the other;

and the reason given for it is, that they were men of equal ability. The same cause that could make two unanimous would make twenty so, and would, at least, secure a majority among as many hundreds.

As to the reformation of the Church, I want none, unless by a better provision for the inferior clergy ; and if that could be brought about by emaciating a little some of our too corpulent dignitaries, I should be well contented.

The Dissenters, I think, Catholics and others, have all a right to the privilege of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution ; and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is an abomination. But, after all, *valeat respublica*. I love my country, I love my king, and I wish peace and prosperity to Old England.

Adieu !

W. C.

CXCV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

GIBBON CONSULTED ABOUT HOMER AND HIS BLINDNESS—
FLAXMAN'S ENGRAVINGS FOR THE ILIAD AND ODYSSEY—HIS
MONUMENT TO LORD MANSFIELD—WHAT MANSFIELD WAS
FORTY YEARS BEFORE.

Weston, August 27, 1793.

I THANK you, my dear brother, for consulting the Gibbonian oracle on the question concerning Homer's muse and his blindness. I proposed it likewise to my little neighbour Buchanan, who gave me precisely the same answer. I felt an insatiable thirst to learn something

new concerning him ; and, despairing of information from others, was willing to hope that I had stumbled on matter unnoticed by the commentators, and might, perhaps, acquire a little intelligence from himself. But the great and the little oracle together have extinguished that hope, and I despair now of making any curious discoveries about him.

Since Flaxman (which I did not know till your letter told me so) has been at work for the *Iliad* as well as the *Odyssey*, it seems a great pity that the engravings should not be bound up with some Homer or other ; and, as I said before, I should have been too proud to have bound them up in mine. But there is an objection, at least such it seems to me, that threatens to disqualify them for such a use—namely, the shape and size of them, which are such that no book of the usual form could possibly receive them, save in a folded state, which, I apprehend, would be to murder them.

The monument of Lord Mansfield, for which you say he is engaged, will, I dare say, prove a noble effort of genius. Statuaries, as I have heard an eminent one say, do not much trouble themselves about a likeness : else I would give much to be able to communicate to Flaxman the perfect idea that I have of the subject, such as he was forty years ago. He was at that time wonderfully handsome ; and would expound the most mysterious intricacies of the law, or recapitulate both matter and evidence of a cause as long as from hence to Earham, with an intelligent smile on his features, that bespoke plainly the perfect ease with which he did it. The most abstruse studies, I believe, never cost him any labour.

You say nothing lately of your intended journey our

way : yet the year is waning, and the shorter days give you a hint to lose no time unnecessarily. Lately we had the whole family at the Hall, and now we have nobody. The Throckmortons are gone into Berkshire, and the Courtenays into Yorkshire. They are so pleasant a family that I heartily wish you to see them, and at the same time wish to see you before they return, which will not be sooner than October. How shall I reconcile these wishes, seemingly opposite ? Why, by wishing that you may come soon and stay long. I know no other way of doing it.

My poor Mary is much as usual. I have set up Homer's head, and inscribed the pedestal ; my own Greek at the top, with your translation under it, and

᾽Ως δὲ παῖς φ᾽ πατρὶ, &c.

It makes altogether a very smart and learned appearance.

W. C.

CXCVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

DESCRIPTION OF WESTON, TO WHICH HE INVITES HIS OLD
AND VALUED FRIEND.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, November 5, 1793.

IN a letter from Lady Hesketh, which I received not long since, she informed me how very pleasantly she had spent some time at Wargrove. We now begin to expect her here, where our charms of situation are perhaps not equal to yours, yet by no means contemptible.

She told me she had spoken to you in very handsome terms of the country round about us, but not so of our house, and the view before. The house itself, however, is not unworthy some commendation : small as it is, it is neat, and neater than she is aware of ; for my study and the room over it have been repaired and beautified this summer, and little more was wanting to make it an abode sufficiently commodious for a man of my moderate desires. As to the prospect from it, *that* she misrepresented strangely, as I hope soon to have an opportunity to convince her by ocular demonstration. She told you, I know, of certain cottages opposite to us, or rather she described them as poor houses and hovels, that effectually blind our windows. But none such exist. On the contrary, the opposite object, and the only one, is an orchard, so well planted, and the trees of such growth, that we seem to look into a wood, or rather to be surrounded by one. Thus, placed as we are in the midst of a village, we have none of those disagreeables that belong to such a position ; and the village itself is one of the prettiest I know, terminated at one end by the church-tower, seen through the trees, and at the other by a very handsome gateway, opening into a fine grove of elms, belonging to our neighbour Courtenay. How happy should I be to show it, instead of describing it to you !

Adieu, my dear friend !

W. C.

CXCVII.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

HURDIS APPOINTED PROFESSOR OF POETRY AT OXFORD—
THOUGHTS ON THE COALITION AGAINST FRANCE AT THE
BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, November 10, 1793.

You are very kind to consider my literary engagements, and to make them a reason for not interrupting me more frequently with a letter; but though I am indeed as busy as an author or an editor can well be, and am not apt to be overjoyed at the arrival of letters from uninteresting quarters, I shall always, I hope, have leisure both to peruse and to answer those of my real friends, and to do both with pleasure.

I have to thank you much for your benevolent aid in the affair of my friend Hurdis. You have doubtless learned ere now that he has succeeded, and carried the prize by a majority of twenty. He is well qualified for the post he has gained. So much the better for the honour of the Oxonian laurel, and so much the more for the credit of those who have favoured him with their suffrages.

I am entirely of your mind respecting this conflagration, by which all Europe suffers at present, and is likely to suffer for a long time to come. The same mistake seems to have prevailed as in the American business. We then flattered ourselves that the Colonies would prove an easy conquest; and when all the neighbour nations armed themselves against France, we imagined, I believe, that she, too, would be presently vanquished. But we begin already to be undeceived, and

God only knows to what a degree we may find we have erred at the conclusion. Such, however, is the state of things all around us, as reminds me continually of the Psalmist's expression, "He shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel." And I rather wish than hope, in some of my melancholy moods, that England herself may escape a fracture.

I remain, truly yours,

W. C

CXOVIII.

To the REV. MR. HURDIS.

CONGRATULATIONS ON HIS BEING MADE PROFESSOR OF POETRY
—HAYLEY'S "LIFE OF MILTON."

MY DEAR SIR,

Weston, November 24, 1793.

THOUGH my congratulations have been delayed, you have no friend, numerous as your friends are, who has more sincerely rejoiced in your success than I. It was no small mortification to me to find that three out of the six whom I had engaged were not qualified to vote. You have prevailed, however, and by a considerable majority ; there is, therefore, no room left for regret. When your short note arrived, which gave me the agreeable news of your victory, our friend of Eartham was with me, and shared largely in the joy that I felt on the occasion. He left me but a few days since, having spent somewhat more than a fortnight here, during which time we employed all our leisure hours in the revisal of his *Life of Milton*. It is now finished, and a very finished work it is, and one that will do

great honour, I am persuaded, to the biographer, and the excellent man, of injured memory, who is the subject of it. As to my own concern with the works of this first of poets, which has been long a matter of burdensome contemplation, I have the happiness to find, at last, that I am at liberty to postpone my labours. While I expected that my Commentary would be called for in the ensuing spring, I looked forward to the undertaking with dismay, not seeing a shadow of probability that I should be ready to answer the demand ; for this ultimate revisal of my Homer, together with the notes, occupies completely at present (and will for some time longer) all the little leisure that I have for study ; leisure which I gain, at this season of the year, by rising long before daylight.

You are now become a nearer neighbour, and, as your professorship, I hope, will not engross you wholly, will find an opportunity to give me your company at Weston. Let me hear from you soon ; tell me how you like your new office, and whether you perform the duties of it with pleasure to yourself. With much pleasure to others, you will, I doubt not ; and with equal advantage.

W. C.

CXCIX.

*To the REV. MR. BUCHANAN, Curate of Ravenstone, near
Weston.*

BEGS HIS FRIEND TO GIVE HIM NEWS OF WESTON.

Mundesley, Norfolk, September 5, 1795.

To interpose a little ease,
Let my frail thoughts dally with false surmise.

I WILL forget, for a moment, that to whomsoever I may address myself, a letter from me can no otherwise be welcome than as a curiosity. To you, sir, I address this, urged to it by extreme penury of employment, and the desire I feel to learn something of what is doing, and has been done at Weston (my beloved Weston!) since I left it.

The coldness of these blasts, even in the hottest days, has been such, that, added to the irritation of the salt spray with which they are always charged, they have occasioned me an inflammation in the eyelids, which threatened a few days since to confine me entirely; but by absenting myself as much as possible from the beach, and guarding my face with an umbrella, that inconvenience is in some degree abated. My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high-water approach the coast so closely, that a man furnished with better eyes than mine might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter; which you will easily credit, when I add that it imparts something a

little resembling pleasure, even to me. Gratify me with news from Weston. If Mr. Gregson and your neighbours the Courtenays are there, mention me to them in such terms as you see good. Tell me if my poor birds are living. I never see the herbs I used to give them without a recollection of them, and sometimes am ready to gather them, forgetting that I am not at home. Pardon this intrusion.

Mrs. Unwin continues much as usual.

W. C.

To Weston—his beloved Weston!—after which the poet so pathetically inquires, he never returned. Bodily weakness and mental gloom gathered heavily upon him; and correspondence with his friends by letters almost entirely ceased after the year 1795. Mrs. Unwin died in December, 1796; and his affectionate kinsman Johnson tried every method to relieve his complicated afflictions, by frequent change of residence, and varieties of reading and literary employment. In 1798, without solicitation, he wrote the following letter to his affectionate cousin:—

CC.

TO LADY HESKETH.

HE CAN TAKE NO PLEASURE IN THE MOST DELIGHTFUL
SCENES—"WE SHALL MEET NO MORE."

DEAR COUSIN,

Mundesley, October 18, 1798.

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he even saw them, could receive no



EAST DEREHAM.

delight from them ; who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties ; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any.

In one day, in one *minute* I should rather have said, she became a universal blank to me ; and though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself. In this country, if there are not mountains, there are hills ; if not broad and deep rivers, yet such as are sufficient to embellish a prospect ; and an object still more magnificent than any river, the ocean itself, is almost immediately under the window. Why is scenery like this—I had almost said, why is the very scene, which many years since I could not contemplate without rapture, now become, at the best, an insipid wilderness to me ? It neighbours nearly and as nearly resembles the scenery of Catfield ; but with what different perceptions does it present me ! The reason is obvious. My state of mind is a medium through which the beauties of Paradise itself could not be communicated with any effect but a painful one.

There is a wide interval between us, which it would be far easier for you than for me to pass. Yet I should in vain invite you. We shall meet no more. I know not what Mr. Johnson said of me in the long letter he addressed to you yesterday ; but nothing, I am sure, that could make such an event seem probable.

I remain, as usual, dear cousin, yours,

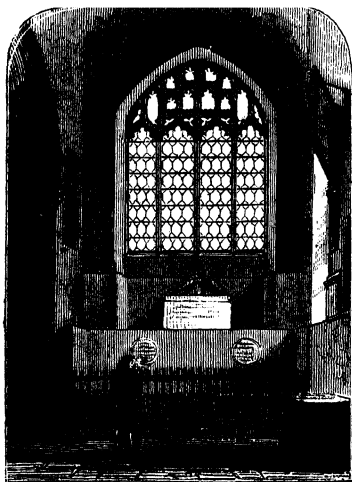
W. C.

FROM the date of this letter to Lady Hesketh, his mind seems to have gradually settled into deepening gloom. His last recorded letter, to his old and valued friend Mr. Newton, dated Dereham, April 11, 1799, is in the same sad strain as his last original poem, "The Cast-away." Newton had sent him the Biography of some good man, with whose life and prospects Cowper sorrowfully contrasts his own. "If," he writes, "it afforded me any amusement, or suggested to me any reflections, they were only such as served to embitter, if possible, still more the present moment, by a sad retrospect of those days when I thought myself secure of an eternity to be spent with the spirits of such men as he whose life afforded the subject of it. But I was little aware of what I had to expect; and that a storm was at hand, which in one terrible moment would darken, and in another, still more terrible, blot out that prospect for ever."

In the following year, 1800, on the 25th day of the same month of April, in which he thus wrote to his early and well-beloved friend, the long-tried sufferer expired.

We have now brought to a conclusion, our Selection from the Letters of Cowper. The closing notes are of a deeply tragic tone; but by the sadness of our feelings, the heart may be made better. When we take a survey

of the whole of his Life and Writings, we cannot doubt of his being one of those who, through much tribulation, have entered into the kingdom of God ; and that, however mournful his strains were sometimes here below, his "golden harp" (to use his own words) is now employed in "a nobler, sweeter song."



COWPER'S TOMB.

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